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5 European nations say Russian oppn leader Navalny was killed by a 'rare toxin' from a dart frog & that Russian state is key suspect, Inside J&t

B'luru boy goes missing in US, kin seek govt's help

A 23-year-old Indian postgraduate student has gone missing in California. Saketh Sreenivasulah, a student at UC Berkeley, is from Bengaluru. His backpack, with his passport and laptop, was found on a doorstep by the police. His father has approached the Karnataka govt, seeking its intervention in tracing Saketh. P 4

Banker steals ₹4cr gold from lockers

An assistant manager at a bank's Girinagar branch allegedly stole 2.7kg gold ornaments worth over ₹4 crore from 16 customers' lockers, to spend on online gambling. He confessed to stealing the gold between June last year and Jan. P 2

3 K'taka devotees die in T'gana crash

Three Karnataka devotees died and seven relatives were injured when their vehicle crashed into a roadside culvert in Telangana's Nagar Kurnool while travelling to Srisailam. Police suspect the driver dozed off. P 10

Study links coffee to lower dementia risk

A large US study found moderate caffeinated coffee or tea intake linked to lower dementia risk. Strongest benefit appeared at 3-5 cups daily; decaffeinated coffee showed no benefit. The message from experts is not to up caffeine intake. P 16

Know Namma Karnataka?

SCAN THE Q!

Scan the QR & answer the quiz question. Correct answer will be revealed tomorrow!

*T&C Apply

Yesterday's answer: Girish Kasaravalli

Ex-lovers found dead in locked car in Noida

A man and a woman were found dead with head gunshot wounds inside a locked car in Noida. Police suspect it's a case of murder-suicide, and that the man killed his ex-girlfriend before shooting himself. P 13

BLO arrested for murder in Bengal

A BLO, accused for abducting a man in Bengal has confessed to killing him, police said Saturday, after body parts were retrieved from water bodies near the Bangladesh border. P 17

POLITICS OVER. CRICKET NOW

It's the game that almost didn't happen. But in the end, cricket prevailed. Now, it's time to focus on the most eagerly awaited group match of the T20 World Cup. Team India is the higher ranked side; Pakistan far better acclimatised. Worryingly, rain is forecast in Colombo today. But, hopefully, the weather gods will be kind and both teams will get a chance to showcase their skills over a full match. **Where are you watching the Sunday night game?** | P 21

Time & Venue: 7pm | R Premadasa Stadium, Colombo

Capacity: 35,000

Weather: Showers predicted in daytime. Chances of rain low in the evening

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Overall: India have won 13 of 16 T20 games against Pakistan. **Success rate: 81%**

In T20 WC: India have won 7 out of 8 games against Pakistan. **Success rate: 88%**

Key Fact: The two sides have previously played only one T20 WC game in Colombo. India triumphed by 8 wickets. Current coach Gautam Gambhir played in that match

INDIA World No. 1

Nickname: Men in Blue
Previous Best: Winners (2007, 2024)
Captain: Suryakumar Yadav
Formbook (last 5 games): W W W L W
In This World Cup: Beat US by 29 runs, Namibia by 93 runs
Positives: Packed with intimidating batters (Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav) and match-winning all-rounders (Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel). Possess two world-class bowlers (Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravarthy)
Concerns: Under-prepared for Lankan conditions. Opener Abhishek's match-fitness. Barring Tilak Varma, no top-order batter with proven big match temperament. At least three below par fielders. Negotiating Pak spinner Usman Tariq

X-Factor: Mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy, also world's no. 1 ranked T20 bowler
Highest Run-Getter in T20 WCs (In Squad): Suryakumar, 576 runs
Highest Wicket-Taker in T20 WCs (In Squad): Arshdeep Singh, 30

PAK World No. 6

Nickname: Shaheen. Also, Men in Green
Previous Best: Winners (2009)
Captain: Salman Agha
Formbook: W W W W W
In This World Cup: Beat Netherlands by three wickets, US by 32 runs
Positives: Opener Sahibzada Farhan in great nick. All-rounder Salm Ayub back to scoring runs, taking wickets. Plethora of spin bowling options (Abrar Ahmed, Usman Tariq, Shadab Khan). Well-adjusted to the conditions, having already played and won two WC matches in Colombo
Concerns: Mercurial team with tendency to fall apart, as evident against the Netherlands. Star pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi's lack of form. Premium batter Babar Azam's low strike rate. Fielding and catching, in general

X-Factor: Off-spinner Usman Tariq, whose complex bowling action has been twice cleared by ICC
Highest Run-Getter in T20 WCs (In Squad): Babar Azam, 618 runs
Highest Wicket-Taker in T20 WCs (In Squad): Shaheen Shah Afridi, 25

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Wait for 24 hours
—SURYAKUMAR on whether the 2 teams will shake hands

ONCE UPON A TIME IN COLOMBO: The only occasion when India and Pak previously played a T20 WC game in Lanka in 2012, it became a one-man show. Virat Kohli not only castled Pak captain Mohd Hafeez but also slammed a match-winning 78 off 61 balls with two sixes and eight fours. Scores: Pak 128, India: 129/2. MoM: Virat Kohli

G20-like security setup for AI summit in Delhi

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New Delhi: From anti-drone systems to 100-odd police personnel at each of the 10 hotels housing VIPs and 6,000 traffic cops, a G20-like security apparatus is being put in place for the five-day AI (Artificial Intelligence) Impact Summit beginning at Bharat Mandapam Monday.

Sources said a robust air defence setup, including five anti-drone systems, would guard the venue. They are designed to detect, track and neutralise drones in real time. Multiple air defence guns will also be deployed. Similar systems were in place for the world leaders' G20 summit at the same venue in Sept 2023.

The venue will be equipped with more than 300 CCTV cameras, most of them featuring advanced video analytics, including facial recognition technology linked to a comprehensive criminal database and automatic number plate recognition system integrated with a database of stolen or suspicious vehicles.

▶Continued on P 13

SAM ALTMAN WRITES IN TOI

India has all the ingredients to be a full-stack AI leader: **Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI,** writes in TOI, adding govt's IndiaAI Mission is designed to support startups, and speed up multilingual applications to improve public services delivery. AI will help define India's future, and India will help define AI's future. P 14

Additional capabilities, such as intrusion detection and suspect object identification, are also being incorporated to strengthen overall security. Inside, a mini control room will be set up to monitor suspicious activity. It will have control over all CCTV feeds and can directly alert police personnel, allowing immediate action, if necessary.

'AI summit will highlight POV of Global South'

As I Impact Summit is India's attempt to pull the global AI debate away from labs and boardrooms and anchor it in people and real-world outcomes, Abhishek Singh, CEO of IndiaAI Mission, told TOI. "This is the first summit of its kind and scale being hosted in the Global South," said Singh. "AI today is largely controlled by a few countries and a few companies. India wants to bring the perspective of the Global South and ensure that AI is more inclusive and democratised."

Over the past decade, platforms such as Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and telemedicine have shown how digital systems can deliver services to hundreds of millions, he said. "We want to showcase India's strength in building AI applications at population scale and also be the voice of the Global South." P 13

ITIs to allow students to study across campuses from this academic year

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Mumbai: In a first, the Indian Institutes of Technology will begin opening their classrooms to one another from this academic year.

Students will be allowed to take select courses at other IIT campuses and even spend a term away from their parent institute, marking the first formal academic exchange within the IIT system. Insiders said the move quietly loosens the rigidity of the JEE-run system, where a single rank has long determined not just entry into an IIT but the boundaries of a student's academic experience in various IITs," said IIT Madras director Padma Shri V Kamakoti. "Once that is matched, our students from IIT Madras can spend a term in another IIT or a student from IIT Kanpur or Delhi or Indore can come to the Madras campus to study some courses and earn credits that we will transfer to the home institute."

For years, universities across the world have been collaborating through joint degrees and shared classrooms. How, India's most prestigious technical institutions have largely watched this trend from the sidelines.

"We are mapping curricula across multiple programmes for 4 or more years thereafter.

STUDENTS' CREDITS WILL BE TRANSFERRED

- From 2026-27, students can take select courses & spend a term on other IIT campuses
- Move lessens rigidity of JEE-run system, where ranks are key
- For courses on another campus, credits to be transferred to the students' home institute
- Decision to be implemented in a limited, controlled manner
- Globally, unive have been collaborating via joint degrees & shared classrooms for years

▶Student mobility plan, P 11

Absconders can't get anticipatory bail: SC

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New Delhi: The SC has directed all high courts not to grant anticipatory bail to accused persons who abscond and later, after their co-accused are acquitted on completion of trial, approach constitutional courts seeking protection from arrest.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and Vijay Bishnoi set aside the Madhya Pradesh HC order that granted anticipatory bail to the absconding accused, directed him to surrender and apply for regular bail. It frowned upon the HC's direction to the trial court to grant bail on the day the accused moves the bail plea.

IN THE COURTS

- Punjab & Haryana HC issues notice to AAP MP Rajinder Gupta on plea alleging irregularities in his election to RS | P 11
- Ch'garh HC: WhatsApp chats are admissible in matrimonial cases even if obtained illegally: privacy is not absolute | P 9
- Marriage cannot be ground to deny woman compassionate job, says Orissa HC, orders state to give job in 8 weeks | P 11
- J Shaji Krishnamoorthy of DMK gets 2-year jail for obscene speech against TN governor R N Ravi & oppn politicians | P 18

▶Accused to surrender, P 9

25-yr wait in HC, SC for finality in corruption case

New Delhi: For decades, the SC has lamented the erosion of public faith in judiciary because of the slow pace of justice delivery especially for common citizens. This week, it closed a corruption case that had dragged on for nearly 28 years — six years in trial court, 14 years in HC and 11 years in SC, reports **Dhananjay Mahapatra.**

The case revolved around illegal siphoning of 400 cc cement bags meant for the public works division at Aurangabad on March 14, 1994. The trial court convicted the accused six years later on Apr 3, 2000. To concur with the trial court's decision, the Bombay HC took more than 14 years.

▶'Lapse lies...', P 9

BNP wants Modi, Saarc leaders at Tarique oath

PM Modi will be invited to the swearing-in ceremony of the new govt in Bangladesh led by BNP chief Tarique Rahman, who wants to engage constructively with India. Senior BNP functionaries indicated that Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif and other heads of govt of Saarc countries will also be invited. This will be only the second time after PM Modi's first swearing-in in 2014 that such an assembly of leaders of south Asian countries would take place. Inside J&t

Rohit Pawar writes to Shah for crash probe

NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar has written to Union home minister Amit Shah seeking a "comprehensive and independent" probe into the Jan 28 plane crash in which his uncle and former Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar was killed, reports **Aanand Bende.**

Sharing the Feb 12 letter on his X handle, Rohit said he had also sought appointments with Shah, civil aviation minister K Ram Mohan Naidu and senior DGCA officials. Rohit said the probe, to be completed in one month, should investigate discrepancies in official records. P 16

Cabinet OKs India's 1st underwater road-cum-rail tunnel in Assam

Dibrugarh/Guwahati: The Union Cabinet has approved infrastructure projects worth over Rs 31,000 crore, including construction of the country's first road-cum-rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra in Assam. The twin-tube common tunnel with approach roads for movement of vehicles and trains, only the second in the world, would cost Rs 18,662 crore, reports **Dipak Dash.**

It will connect Golpur and Numaligarh in Assam and will cut travel time from about 6 hours to just 25 minutes. The project, to be fully funded by govt, will not just reduce the travel distance from 240 km to roughly 34 km improving connectivity but also has strategic significance, I&B minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said while announcing the Cabinet decision. This 9-km-long tunnel will ensure high-speed connectivity to Arunachal and provide "strategic resilience" for defence purposes. The minister said the twin tubes would be interconnected at intervals of 600 metres.

PM Modi lands on a roll-forced highway in Assam's Moran near Dibrugarh in a C-130J on Saturday | P 10

Officials said the tunnel would be built around 32 metres beneath the Brahmaputra's lowest bed level. One of the tubes will have provision for a single rail track and no vehicular movement will be allowed when trains run through this tube.

▶Boost to connectivity, P 17

US RELEASES NIKHIL GUPTA PHOTO

Photo released by US authorities shows **Nikhil Gupta,** accused of plotting Sikh chief Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's assassination. Gupta pleaded guilty to 3 charges Friday — murder-for-hire, and conspiracies to commit that crime and launder money. This was a reversal from the stand he took in court in 2024, when he had said that he was not guilty. **Sentencing is scheduled for May 29**

Ashley Tellis indicted in espionage case

A grand jury in Virginia has indicted former US govt adviser Ashley J Tellis on 11 counts of wilful retention of national defence information under the Espionage Act. The documents include material related to Chinese nuclear capabilities, assessments of foreign military forces, vulnerabilities of a US military facility, and projections of future nuclear capabilities of foreign govts. The indictment notes that at no point during the charged period did Tellis deliver or attempt to deliver the classified documents to any officer or employee of the US entitled to receive them. Inside J&t

A decade in the wild: Namma 'Tarzan' makes forest his home, lives on leaves

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Belagavi: On a scrubby, wind-beaten stretch of rocky hills near Ugargol village in Saundatti taluk, a lean, bare-chested figure moves with practised ease. For nearly a decade, Budan Khan Hosamani has called the forested slopes of Heggolla home — claiming to have survived on raw leaves and wild greens, far from the prying eyes of society.

Locals have christened the 34-year-old the "Modern-Day Tarzan", a comparison inspired by his muscular build, minimal clothing and apparent comfort in the wild. The analogy may be a touch dramatic — there are no jungle vines or cinematic leaps here — but Budan's life in the forest undeniably set him apart.

"I like living in the forest, not in public," he says.

JUNGLE TALES: Budan Khan lives on nearly 80 varieties of leaves and plants. Watching monkeys' habits helped him identify safe leaves

Budan claims to have spent the past 10 years in the hills, sustaining himself on nearly 80 varieties of edible leaves and plants endemic to the region. He insists he does not eat cooked food, rice or roti, and no longer finds conventional meals appealing.

His daily routine includes long walks, yoga and exercise — practices he credits for helping him digest raw vegetation. His unusual diet, he says, was learned from observing monkeys.

"I watched what they eat and what they avoid," Budan explains. Studying their habits, he claims, helped him identify safe leaves and steer clear of harmful ones.

▶Mobile for emergencies, P 4

Summer checks in early, parts of K'taka on heat alert

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Bengaluru: When Percy Bysshe Shelley famously wrote "If winter comes, can spring be far behind", in his 'Ode to the West Wind', it was an invocation to the West Wind to emerge as a powerful vehicle of change and rejuvenation. But, on Saturday, as mid-Feb maximum temperatures in parts of state saw an abnormal surge, triggering heatwave-alerts in northern Karnataka and coastal areas, it was perhaps time to pen an 'Ode to the East Wind' as meteorologists cited an absence of moisture-laden winds "sweeping in from the Bay of Bengal" as the reason behind this unusual spike in heat. So, 'if' spring comes with such a scorcher, can a torturous summer be far behind', is the question to ask! An Orange alert has been issued for Uttara Kannada.

TORTUROUS SUMMER

- Bengaluru recorded a maximum temperature of 31.4°C on Saturday — the highest so far this year
- Areas surrounding the city airport touched 32°C
- In Bengaluru, maximum temperatures likely to stay between 29°C and 31°C over the next two days
- Yellow alert issued for Udupi district, warning of possible heatwave

▶B'luru records 31°C, P 3

Divided by conflict, Meiteis and Kukis unite on a football field

Imphal: In villages across the foothills near western Imphal, young men have spent nearly three years taking turns through the night standing at the edge of their settlements with sticks and torches after elders decided vigilance was no longer optional. In Kuki villages, night patrols began almost immediately after clashes erupted on May 3, 2023. In Naga-majority ones, they intensified after tensions flared in Litan this week.

Some of these youngsters were brought to Assam Rifles' New Keithelmanbi Garrison earlier this week after finishing guard duty that morning, **reports Vishant Agarwala.** They are footballers. From Monday to Thursday, 13 teams — eight Naga, three Meitei and two Kuki — from nearby villages gathered at the garrison's uneven, dusty football ground for Assam Rifles' Foothills Football Tournament, organised under Operation Sadbhavana.

Players of Haibung (black) and Keithelmanbi (green) face off in the final on Thursday

Keithelmanbi lies along the seam where the Imphal Valley rises into the surrounding hills, a geography that has hardened into buffer zones and guarded perimeters. The teams were named after nearby villages. But even a distance of 4km can carry more meaning than it suggests.

The Kuki teams — including Haibung FC which reached Thursday's final — crossed the buffer zone for the first time since May 2023 in Assam Rifles buses with guards.

▶Game's spirit, P 18

At parents' final rites, accused son shows no emotion

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Bengaluru: Days after the alleged murder of Capt Naveen Chandra Bhat and Dr Shyamala Bhat, their son and prime accused Rohan Chandra Bhat, was escorted by police to the Wilson Garden crematorium Saturday evening to attend their final rites.

Acting on permission granted by a special court, police brought Rohan from Nimhans, where he has been undergoing treatment, to the crematorium to perform the rituals in accordance with family traditions. The bodies of the couple were brought to the crematorium around 5pm. Their daughter, Rashmi Bhat, 31, who had flown in from the United States, joined close relatives for the last rites.

As friends and family gathered to bid farewell to the couple, grief at the venue was mingled with disbelief, the tragedy still too overwhelming to fully comprehend.

DOUBLE MURDER

Inside the crematorium hall, silence prevailed as the bodies were placed side by side. Rashmi stepped forward to perform the rituals, holding herself together despite visible anguish. Under tight security, a handcuffed Rohan was brought in briefly to see his parents one last time. He displayed no visible emotion — no tears, no sign of distress — and appeared detached from the proceedings.

HE WAS THERE FOR JUST 5 MINS

- Police escorted prime accused Rohan Chandra Bhat from Nimhans to Wilson Garden crematorium to attend the last rites of his parents, Capt Naveen Chandra Bhat & Shyamala Bhat, after court granted him permission
- As friends and family gathered to bid farewell to the deceased couple, grief hung heavy, mingled with disbelief
- Under tight security, a handcuffed Rohan briefly performed rituals and prayers but showed no visible emotion, standing there less than five minutes before being taken away
- His sister Rashmi Bhat, who flew in from the US, performed the main rites and told investigators that Rohan had been undergoing treatment for schizophrenia and they had been estranged for two years

Following the priest's instructions, he performed the aruthi with a police officer standing beside him and offered prayers. As observed, Rohan spent less than five minutes inside before being led away without looking back.

Rashmi stood at a distance, watching her brother perform the rituals. A family member said Rohan and Rashmi were rarely seen at extended family gatherings. Those present at the crematorium remembered the couple as quiet, dignified individuals who largely kept to themselves and lived without drawing attention. Amid hushed conversations, one question echoed repeatedly among relatives and friends: why did this happen?

In her statement to investigators, Rashmi said her brother had been undergoing treatment for schizophrenia. "My parents, particularly my mother, tried their best to get him treated. Because of his mood swings and unusual behaviour, I stopped speaking to him two years ago. But I never imagined he would go to this extent," she is said to have told police.

After arriving from the US, Rashmi approached a Bengaluru court seeking permission for her brother to perform the last rites. Following approval granted Saturday morning, police coordinated his escorted visit to the crematorium.

She also outlined his academic background: "After completing his pre-university course (Science) at Jain College, he joined New Horizon College of Engineering in Marathahalli. In 2019, he moved to the United States, where he completed a master's degree in Advanced Applied Artificial Intelligence Technology. He returned to India in 2022," she said.

Advocate questions man for urinating in public, beaten up

Times News Network

Bengaluru: An advocate was allegedly assaulted by a cop and two others for objecting to the policeman urinating in the driveway of his office building on Church Street on the night of Feb 6.

The complainant, Adarsh Gangal, registered an FIR with Cubbon Park police, identifying the accused as Satish. However, the FIR does not mention Satish as a policeman. "We are told that the man, who was urinating, was a policeman in uniform," a senior police officer said.

According to Gangal, he came across the person urinating in the driveway of Kalpak Arcade around 9pm while walking out of the building after work. Two more men were standing nearby and consuming alcohol. "I asked him to use a public toilet. Looking in my direction, he gestured to wait and continued his act. Afterwards, he abused me and tried to snatch my mobile when I tried to call police. The other two persons held me, and one of them hit me on my face, breaking my spectacles," Gangal's complaint read.

When **TOI** tried to contact Gangal, he refused to speak, saying the matter was under investigation. A senior police officer said, "We are looking for the persons. The person, who is believed to be a policeman, is not from the jurisdictional Cubbon Park police station. This is for sure," he said.

State bets big on Devanahalli, gives it investment boost with SIR tag

Region To Be Under Govt Supervision

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How Devanahalli is driving city

- Kempegowda International Airport
- KIADB Aerospace Park (SAP Labs, Boeing, Wistron, Zeiss etc.)
- ITIR (Foxconn plant plus India's largest dormitory for workers)
- New 16-lane NH 44 and 6-lane SH-96
- Half a dozen business parks
- Multiple residential complexes

Photo for representation

SIRs around Bengaluru

Hitech Defence & Aerospace Park Phase 1	3,013.5 acres
Dabaspet Phase 1, 2, 4 & 5	3,057.2 acres
Bidadi Phase 1, 2	1,542.9 acres
Harohalli Phase 1, 2 & 3	2,416.7 acres
Doddaballapur General Apparel Park Phase 1, 2	1,696.1 acres
Bommasandra Phase 1, 2, 3 & 4	1,808.1
Peenya Phase 1, 2, 3 & 4	1,462.5
Devanahalli (ITIR)	3117.9

— Source: KIADB, Govt

Bengaluru: From a quiet sericulture village on the outskirts of the city in the 1990s, Devanahalli has transformed into one of Bengaluru's most powerful growth engines, rapidly evolving into a vibrant hub for employment, industry, and investment. Ever since the start of operations at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) — one of the busiest airports in India — the region has witnessed a dramatic economic shift over the past two decades.

With the proposed Airport City, Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR), Aerospace Park, and a wave of high-value residential developments, Devanahalli has emerged as the epicentre of north Bengaluru's expansion. The steady influx of global manufacturers, technology firms, and allied industries has not only altered the skyline but also generated thousands of jobs, reinforcing its position as a high-growth corridor.

Further strengthening the region's growth trajectory, the state govt recently notified the 'Devanahalli Special Investment Region' (SIR), spanning 3,117.9 acres across 13 village panchayats. The initiative by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) aims to consolidate and upgrade key industrial clusters — including Devanahalli General Phase 1, Devanahalli General Industrial Area Phase 2 and Adhinarayana Hosahalli Phase 2 — into globally competitive economic hubs equipped with world-class infrastructure and civic amenities.

According to KIADB officials, the SIR notification addresses long-standing infrastructure concerns raised by industrialists and entrepreneurs. The industrial township will now be withdrawn from the administrative control of local bodies and brought under direct state govt oversight. "Often, the local bodies neglected development in these areas despite industries paying taxes. This hindered production and manufacturing activities. By notifying them as SIRs, the areas will be placed under the direct monitoring of the state govt," a KIADB official said.

Officials added that jurisdictional overlaps had also created operational hurdles, citing recent property tax notices issued by two village panchayats to the Taiwan-based Foxconn. "Such issues arise because of overlapping authority, which the SIR framework seeks to address," the official noted.

Under the SIR framework, the state can notify an industrial area exceeding 2,500 acres — or 1,250 acres in the case of industrial zones — as an SIR. Commerce and industries minister MB Patil said, "The main objective of granting SIR status is to transform these regions into centres of economic activity supported by premium infrastructure, modern civic amenities, centres of excellence, and a proactive policy framework."

Once notified, the state govt assumes full authority to regulate and develop the region. "Administratively, each SIR will be governed by an apex body approved by KIADB and will report to a regional development authority (RDA), project development agencies under the govt, or special purpose vehicles, as assigned," a KIADB official said, adding that the model mirrors the Electronics City Industrial Township Authority.

The RDA will function as the local planning authority, overseeing infrastructure, taxation, and regulation within the SIR. While the apex authority will serve as a single-window system for investors, the RDA will assess and collect taxes, with 30% remitted to the parent local body.

VALENTINE'S DAY OUT

HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE

GLP-1 RAs effectively improve appetite for better health outcomes

So far known for weight & blood sugar control, these therapies show potential to influence food cravings, consumption and self-control

GLP-1s or GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RAs) are best known for their role in weight loss and metabolic health regulation. Emerging evidence now reveals they may also help curb persistent food cravings to support more holistic lifestyle changes.[1]

GLP-1s IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS
46% REDUCTION IN CONSTANT FOOD THOUGHTS
64% IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH
80% ADOPTED HEALTHIER HABITS

EXPLAINING FOOD NOISE
Food noise is defined as persistent thoughts about food that are perceived by the individual as being unwanted and/or distressing and may cause harm to the individual, including social, mental, or physical problems.[2]

Although food noise can contribute to food cravings, the two are not the same. Food cravings are typically intense but there are occasional urges to eat a specific type of food, often high calorie or energy-dense foods.[5] Food noise, by contrast, is constant and generalised. It involves an ongoing preoccupation with food, including repeated thoughts about what to eat, portion sizes, nutritional content, and meal timing.[2] These thoughts are often accompanied by self-questions such as, "Did I eat enough?" or "Was that too many calories?"[3]

Food noise can be sparked by external triggers such as dieting, the presence of food, or food advertisements, or internal ones such as physical hunger. However, food noise frequently occurs even without these cues, making it especially disruptive.[4]

QUIETING THE NOISE
Certain GLP-1 therapies are proven to significantly reduce food noise.[2,3] "In the US-based INFORM survey, 550 individuals using GLP-1s for weight management reported a 46% reduction in constant thoughts about food.[3] In addition to this, 64% reported improvements in mental health, and 80% adopted healthier habits,[3]" informs Dr Shashank R. Joshi, Consultant Endocrinologist at Lilavati Hospital, Sir HN RFH & Joshi Clinic, Mumbai.

FOOD NOISE
Persistent thoughts about food that are unwanted and distressing.
SOCIAL MENTAL PHYSICAL
MAY CAUSE HARM

REDEFINING OBESITY CARE
Food noise is therefore increasingly recognised as a meaningful and important target in obesity care.[2,3,7] While further research is needed, these findings point to a possible broader role for GLP-1 RAs beyond weight loss. By influencing behaviour, cravings, and mental well-being, they may help people with obesity regain balance, clarity, and healthier everyday lives.[3,6]

Speak to your doctor to learn more about how GLP-1 RAs could support your weight and health journey.

"In the US-based INFORM survey, 550 individuals using GLP-1s for weight management reported a 46% reduction in constant thoughts about food.[3] In addition to this, 64% reported improvements in mental health, and 80% adopted healthier habits"
Dr Shashank R. Joshi
Consultant Endocrinologist at Lilavati Hospital, Sir HN RFH & Joshi Clinic, Mumbai

Take the first step. Talk to a doctor. 86554 52746
Choose your weight wegovwithyou.org
novo nordisk | THE TIMES OF INDIA

ED attaches assets of society prez, CEO

Bengaluru: Sleuths from the Enforcement Directorate's Bengaluru zonal office Saturday attached properties worth around Rs 16 crore belonging to Rajesh VR and his wife, Nagavalli BS, who serve as the CEO and president, respectively, of Srivaibhava Souharda Pattina Sahakari Niyamitha.

The case dates back to June 2022, when the MD of State Souharda Federal Cooperative Ltd lodged a complaint with Subramanyapura police against the board members of Srivaibhava Souharda Pattina Sahakari Niyamitha. The complaint alleged that the board members had cheated investors by sanctioning loans to entities headed by the couple without obtaining proper securities. The entities subsequently defaulted on repayment of the loans. "It was found that Rajesh and Nagavalli diverted public deposits amounting to Rs 66 crore. A big portion of these funds was routed through their personal bank accounts as well as through accounts of fictitious entities allegedly created by them for the purpose of money laundering. The attached properties include land, plots, and buildings in Ramanagara, Mysuru and Bengaluru" ED said. TNN

Addicted to gambling, bank staffer steals gold worth ₹4cr

Times News Network

Bengaluru: An assistant manager at a public-sector bank in the city has landed in police net on charges of stealing around 2.1kg of gold ornaments, pledged against loans and kept in the bank lockers of 15 customers, to spend on online gambling. The value of the stolen gold articles is over Rs 4 crore, says the bank in its police complaint.

The accused is **Kiran Kumar E**, attached to Indian Bank, Girinagar branch. Based on a complaint filed by the chief manager of the bank, Dileep Kumar, police have booked Kumar under BNS section 316 (criminal breach of trust). The theft came to light on Feb 2, when a woman customer, who closed her gold loan and was getting the pledged ornaments released, found several ornaments missing. Complainant Kumar stated, "Immediately, we carried out a stock verification on the 207 packets containing gold ornaments pledged with us against loans for the last one year. Of them, 24 packets were tampered with. On examination, we discovered that gold from three packets had completely vanished. Gold ornaments from the remaining 21 packets were partially missing."

An internal inquiry was conducted in which Kumar confessed to stealing them between June 2025 and Jan 2026. "Kumar pledged the stolen ornaments with different private finance firms for money. We succeeded in recovering around 1.2kg from them. However, some firms are not cooperating with us, and we are approaching court for intervention," an investigating officer said.

"The pledged gold ornaments are kept in separate lockers, and only the manager and assistant manager have the keys to them. Misusing his official power, Kiran gained access to these lockers and stole part by part," he added.

Police have requested customers availing locker facilities (for personal use or for pledging against loans) to do a periodic check on their stock. "Kiran stole mostly from those lockers which were unattended for long," they said.

Reserves crowded? National authority says Bandipur can have 119 more tigers

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Photo for representation

The rise in human-tiger conflict came under focus in Jan 2026. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre informed the CM that the soaring tiger numbers in Bandipur and Nagarahole have exceeded optimal density, forcing many big cats to stray into human habitations

Bengaluru: A sudden spike in human-wildlife conflict towards the end of the last year reignited a long-running debate over the carrying capacity of Karnataka's tiger reserves. For over a decade, the issue resurfaced whenever incidents involving tigers rose, with the state govt and forest officials often attributing attacks on humans to reserves running out of space.

However, a recent analysis by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), based on data submitted by Karnataka, challenged the claim. The review found that three key tiger reserves — Bandipur, Nagarahole, and Biligiri Ranga Temple (BRT) reserve — had tiger populations well within their estimated carrying capacities.

The issue came into sharp focus in the first week of Jan this year when chief minister Siddaramaiah chaired a meeting to reconsider the ban on jungle safaris in tiger reserves. The first question he posed to officials was about the reasons for the sudden rise in conflict. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre attributed the surge to high tiger density in Bandipur and Nagarahole.

"Bandipur had just 12 tigers when it was notified as a tiger reserve in 1973, but the population has now crossed 200. Experts estimate that each tiger requires about 10sqkm of territory. With two reserves together spanning roughly 900sqkm, the area is effectively supporting nearly double the optimal population density, resulting in the likelihood of tigers straying into the human habitats," Khandre briefed the CM.

Amid what it described as an unusual and unprecedented rise in tiger capture incidents across Karnataka, NTCA reviewed the draft conservation plans for Bandipur, Nagarahole, and BRT reserve to assess how many tigers these landscapes can scientifically sustain. During Sept-Dec 2025, Karnataka rescued and rehabilitated 27 tigers.

Following its analysis, NTCA wrote to the chief wildlife warden of Karnataka on Jan 27, stating: "As per the available scientific assessments, the tiger populations in these reserves remain within their estimated carrying capacities." The analysis, compared with the figures of the 2022-23 tiger census report, revealed that Bandipur had enough space to accommodate an additional 119 tigers, Nagarahole 55, and BRT 34.

NTCA also cautioned against the routine capture of tigers. "In high-density landscapes, occasional dispersal of tigers beyond the protected areas is a natural ecological process and may not always warrant capture, and such situations are better addressed through intensified monitoring and conflict-mitigation measures in accordance with NTCA guidelines."

68-yr-old falls for digital arrest bait, loses ₹37L

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Bengaluru: A 68-year-old businessman fell prey to a digital arrest scam as cyber-criminals posing as officials from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) allegedly extorted Rs 37 lakh.

The fraud began on Feb 1 and continued until Feb 9, when the victim finally approached the cops.

According to the complaint filed by Sagar (name changed), a resident of Srirampura, he received a call from a stranger who introduced himself as a TRAI official. He claimed that a sim card issued in his name was being used for illegal activities such as unlawful advertisements and harassment calls. Sagar informed the caller the number mentioned did not belong to him. However, the fraudster insisted that the sim card was purchased using his Aadhaar card and said he would connect the call to a CBI officer in Mumbai.

Another fraudster then spoke to Sagar and claimed that a case of money laundering was registered against him in Mumbai and that he was in serious trouble. Claiming that a bank account opened in Sagar's name was being used for hawala transactions, the fraudster asked him to attend a WhatsApp video call. During the call, the miscreant appeared dressed as a police officer, with the CBI logo and office visible in the background.

The fraudsters then demanded that Sagar share details of his bank accounts, passport, and other personal information. He also received video calls from other individuals dressed in police uniforms who claimed to be CBI officials. They warned him not to discuss the matter with anyone, including his family, stating that the case involved VVIPs and was highly confidential. They threatened to arrest him in full public view if he failed to follow their instructions.

The miscreants subsequently instructed him to confine himself to a room and keep the video call active, as he was supposedly under surveillance. On the pretext of a virtual investigation, they collected all his personal, banking, and family details.

On Feb 4, the fraudsters allegedly told Sagar they could drop his name from the case in return for money. Believing their claims, Sagar initially transferred Rs 20 lakh via RTGS from two of his bank accounts. On Feb 6, he transferred another Rs 17 lakh from a third account.

However, when the fraudsters continued to demand more money, the victim realised he was being cheated by an organised syndicate. He discussed the matter with friends and family before going to police. A case has been registered under the Information Technology Act and BNS sections 308 (extortion) and 318 (cheating).

CROOKS POSE AS CBI & TRAI OFFICERS

- The businessman receives call from someone introducing himself as TRAI official, claiming a sim card issued in his name was being used for illegal activities
- Another fraudster tells him that a case of money laundering has been registered against him in Mumbai
- The complainant gets on a WhatsApp video call with the crook dressed as police officer against the backdrop of an office with CBI logo
- The fraudsters get all banking and personal details from the victim
- They threaten to arrest him in full public view if he did not cooperate with them
- They tell him they can drop the criminal charges against him in return for money
- The victim transfers Rs 37 lakh in multiple transactions from his three bank accounts
- The demands don't stop. He realises the fraud, informs his family and friends before approaching police

#DontGetScammed

Gift TOI to your loved ones and protect them from scams. Call 86 68 184 124

Court rejects bail of advocate in Biklu Shiva murder case

Bengaluru: A special court for elected representatives rejected the bail petition filed by Ajit, accused No 20 in the rowdy-sheeter Shivaprakash alias Biklu Shiva murder case, in which BJP MLA from KR Pura constituency BA Basavaraja is also an accused.

Ajit claimed he was an advocate by profession and represented accused no. 1 and 2 in the case. He argued merely because he appeared for the accused, the said professional activity could not be termed as conspiracy.

The special public prosecutor submitted that the petitioner had a criminal background, he used the mobile phones of his office staff to communicate with accused no. 1 and he was involved in financial transactions.

Special judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat said the the contention that accused no. 20 only gave legal advice, for which he was being castigated, cannot be accepted at this juncture. Since it is noticed from the recent CD files furnished by the IO about the incriminating materials against him, the court is of the opinion that no infringement of liberty pertaining to the present accused person took place, he said.

Tiff over chicken: 15-year-old boy stabs friend to death

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

A quarrel between two 15-year-old tribal boys over sharing cooked chicken ended in the murder of one in Varthi haadi in Periyapatna, Mysuru district Friday night.

The two had allegedly stolen a chick and cooked it for a meal to share. Police said the when the portions of the meal appeared uneven, an argument broke out between them, leading to a physical fight. During the confrontation, one of the boys, Dileep, was attacked with a sharp weapon. He was rushed to the hospital but he succumbed to death Saturday.

Periyapatna police have registered a case of murder against the minor accused, who has since fled.

Additional SP C Mallik said the accused attacked the victim after the latter allegedly asked his friend to confess the theft of the chick to its owner. Angered by this, the accused attacked him with the weapon, leading to his death.

Waterborne trouble: K'taka hit hard; docs raise alarm

B'luru Docs Flag Spike In Urban Areas

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Bengaluru: Over the past five years, Karnataka consistently recorded a very high number of acute diarrhoeal disease (ADD) and typhoid cases—both major waterborne illnesses.

In fact, data analysed by the Union health ministry for 2021-25 puts Karnataka among the country's significantly high-burden states, ranking third in typhoid and fifth in ADD.

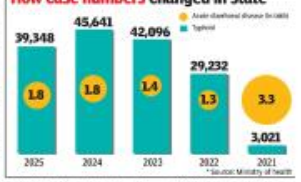
In 2021, the state reported 3.3 lakh ADD and 3,021 typhoid cases. This dropped sharply in 2022 to 1.3 lakh ADD cases (a 61.1% decline from 2021) even as typhoid surged to 29,232 cases (an 867.4% increase). The number of cases largely rose later on.

Meanwhile, leptospirosis (rat fever) also remained comparatively elevated, with 8,697 cases reported over five years, averaging roughly 1,739 cases annually.

Doctors in Bengaluru told TOI that the tech capital's clinical trends mirrored the state data, with ADD and typhoid emerging as persistent concerns in recent years. They noted that waterborne illnesses are no longer confined to rural areas and are increasingly driven by rapid urban expansion and a growing urban population, which intensified pressure on water supply and sanitation systems. "Contrary to popular belief that rural populations are the main victims of waterborne diseases, we are witnessing a considerable disease burden in the urban populace over the years—particularly in congested localities, apartment complexes dependent on tanker water, and construction zones," said Dr Khazi Javeed Irfan, senior consultant – internal medicine, Sparsh Hospital, Infantry Road. "Rural cases remain common, but urban areas are now outnumbering them."

Clinicians in Bengaluru reported seeing 6-10 patients daily with diarrhoea and vomiting, with spikes during monsoon and summer months. Most patients are children or senior citizens, they said

How case numbers changed in state



Clinicians reported seeing 6-10 patients daily with diarrhoea and vomiting, with spikes during monsoon and summer months. Most patients are children or senior citizens, they said.

"Contamination occurs through both outside food and unsafe drinking water. Nearly 50% of patients say they ate no outside food at all, which indicates their home water source is probably contaminated," said Dr Mahesh Kumar JM, internal medicine specialist at KIMS Hospitals. He pointed to deeper structural issues in Bengaluru's water ecosystem: ageing pipelines running close to sewage lines, dependence on tanker supply, unregulated packaged drinking-water cans, and shrinking or polluted waterbodies amid urban growth. "Many lakes in Bengaluru are encroached upon, and the remaining ones are polluted with sewage and industrial waste. Yet tanker water is often drawn from these sources," he said, adding that particulate levels in commonly consumed water frequently exceed safe standards.

Dr TR Ramkumar, consultant – internal medicine, Kauvery Hospitals, Marathahalli, said typhoid continues to be one of the most frequently seen waterborne diseases in his practice. "Though people may not always associate typhoid with contaminated water, it is actually a very common waterborne disease. This is followed by diarrhoeal illnesses caused by bacterial as well as viral infections," he explained.

He added along with unsafe water, uncooked outside food is also the primary infection source. "Well-cooked food eaten outside is unlikely to cause infection. The real risk comes from uncooked items such as salads," he said.

Doctors emphasised that household contamination is still possible even with RO filtration if the incoming water carries a heavy microbial load. They advised boiling drinking water before consumption, regardless of filtration, to prevent prolonged or severe illness.

B'luru records max 31.4°C on Feb 14

▶ Continued from page 1

Saturday, Saturday, Bengaluru logged a maximum of 31.4 degrees Celsius, the highest so far this year — and we're not even into the summer months — while areas around the city's airport touched 32 degrees. Coastal and north-interior regions also saw elevated readings: 32.7° degrees in Udupi, 32.6 degrees in Mangalod and 32.4 degrees in Haliyal. The maximum average temperature for Feb in Bengaluru is around 29 degrees Celsius, while for the rest of the state it's between 29 and 31 degrees.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an Orange Alert for Uttara Kannada, where temperatures are likely to hover between 33 and 34 degrees over the next two days.

In Bengaluru, maximum temperatures are expected to remain between 29 and 31 degrees over the next two days.

C S Patil, scientist at IMD Bengaluru, warned of a harsh summer ahead. "Summer is likely to reach its peak in April-May across Karnataka, with parts of north Karnataka witnessing 43 to 45 degrees Celsius. In Bengaluru, mercury levels are expected to go up to 38 to 40 degrees during the same time," he said. However, he said some respite may be imminent. "Prevailing upper air cyclonic circulation over the Indian Ocean region and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal is likely to reach the coast of Tamil Nadu and infuse much-needed moisture."

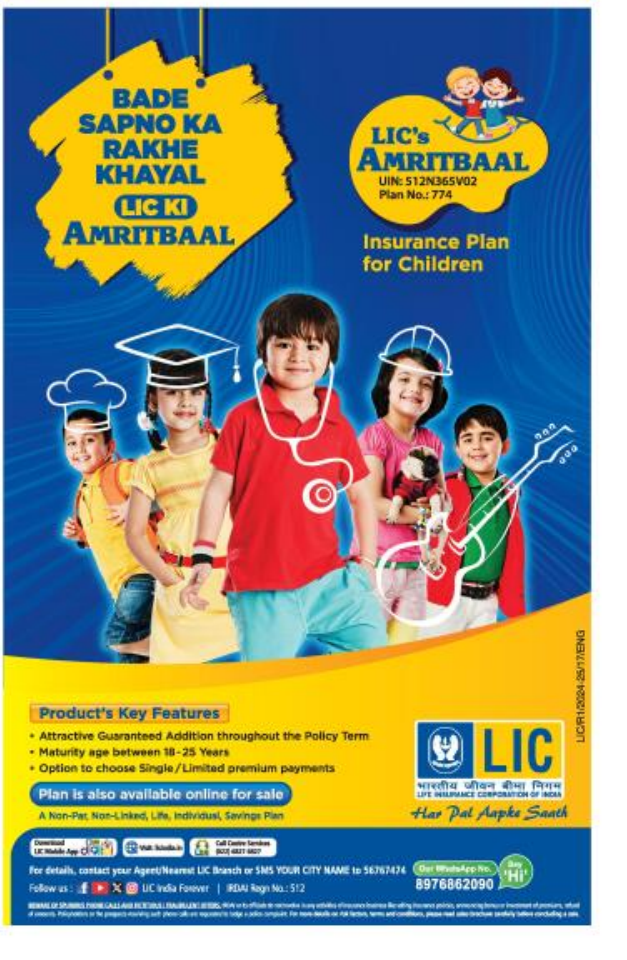
He added: "From Tuesday, the maximum temperature is expected to come down, before surging again by the last week of this month."

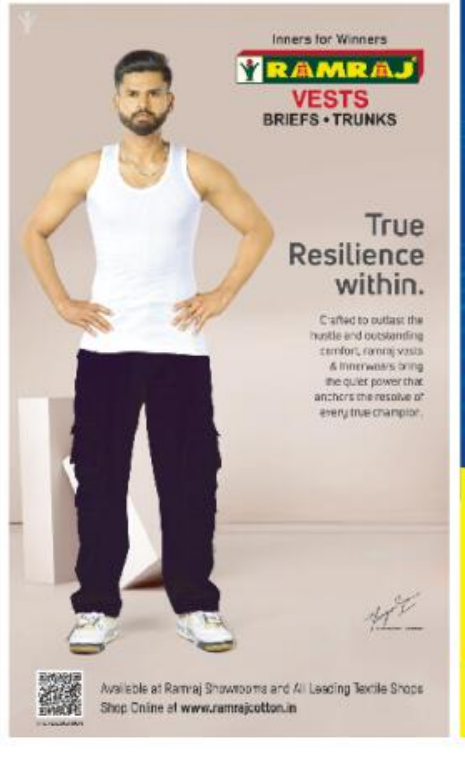
ALMANAC (15.2.2026)

Kumbha Masa 03 Shri Vishwavasu Nava Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Shishira Ritu – Tithi: Magha Krishna Trayodasi h. 17-05 Nakshatra: Uttar Ashadha h. 19-48 Yoga: Vyatipata h. 26-47.26 Shobana Kali Day 1873625 Maha Shivaratri

Rahu Kalam 4.30-6pm

— KL Vidya Shankara Sarnayaji





With 6.8L patients in '25, Nimhans sees record footfall

Times News Network

Bengaluru: More than 6.8 lakh patients visited the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans) in 2025, making it the highest footfall in a year. This was revealed by Dr Pratima Murthy, director of Nimhans, Saturday during the institution day celebrations. She also said that more than 8,000 neurosurgeries were performed during the year.

"Our main metric for success is patient care. The last five years witnessed the highest footfall in our history, after the dip during the Covid-19 period. Last year alone, we recorded over 6.8 lakh patient visits, which was the highest ever," Dr Murthy said.

Speaking about neurosurgeries performed, she said, "We got referrals from very different parts of the country, seeking out our neurosurgeons... We also perform over 20 lakh diagnostic tests across various specialities annually. The numbers speak volumes of the trust placed in our hands and also remind us of the responsibility that comes with the trust."

She mentioned the infrastructure at Nimhans is also expanding to meet the growing demands, with the new OPD complex, with a capacity of up to 5,000 patients a day, being established at a cost of Rs 440 crore, which was announced in Dec 2025. "We're going to double our capacity going forward, and we will expand our outpatient services, provide it all under a single roof, so that the burden on patients to go from one part of the hospital to the other, in the outpatient area, is minimised," she added.

GROWING DEMAND: According to the Nimhans director, more than 8,000 neurosurgeries were performed at the hospital in 2025

> Nimhans got over 500 funded projects and produced nearly 5,000 research publications in the last five years, the highest output in the last few decades
>
> DR PRATIMA MURTHY
> Director of Nimhans

Nimhans also got more than 500 new funded projects and produced nearly 5,000 research publications in the last five years, which Dr Murthy called "the highest output in the last few decades".

Justice BS Patil, Lokayukta of Karnataka, who spoke at the event, criticised widespread deficiencies plaguing govt hospitals, citing surprise inspections that uncovered poor staff attendance, including by doctors, inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and substandard services despite available infrastructure, while saying Nimhans draws a contrasting picture.

"I know that there is tremendous pressure on this institute. The kind of infrastructure available, the beds available — the demand is a completely disproportionate ratio. Demand is more, availability is less. Doctors are fully occupied. But still, you are able to turn out the optimum work. Institutions like this need robust finance," he said.

Fake transfer order in CM's name circulates online

Times News Network

> A note on deputation of K Mohan, serving as health and family welfare officer, Mandya, to the post of DC of excise, Mysuru Rural, is circulating online

Bengaluru: Based on the complaint filed by an official from CM's office, city police booked a case against unidentified persons on charges of faking a transfer order circular in Siddaramaiah's name and posting it on social media.

"A note regarding the deputation of Dr K Mohan, currently serving as district health and family welfare officer, Mandya, to the post of DC of excise, Mysuru Rural, is circulating on social media. This note, which bore no official number or date, was not registered in the E-Office software of the minister's secretariat, nor was the note forwarded to any department. Based on this, no transfer or deputation order was issued either. It appears that this act was committed with the malicious intent of bringing a bad name to the minister and the govt," the complaint read.

Pro-people policies driving Karnataka's GDP, says CM

Claims Given Direct Benefit Of ₹1.2L Cr

Basavaraj Maralihalli | TNN

Haveri: Chief minister Siddaramaiah said Saturday his govt had set records in welfare delivery and economic growth, enabling Karnataka to emerge as one of the leading states in gross domestic product (GDP) in the country.

"It is our pro-people govt that has made Karnataka one of the leading states in GDP in the country. The state is also moving at record speed in GST tax collection," he said,

GOVT'S 1,000 DAYS

after inaugurating the govt's 1,000-day celebrations and a programme to distribute title deeds to one lakh beneficiaries. He said the state govt had provided direct benefits worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore through its guarantee schemes so far.

Citing opinions expressed by economists, including Amartya Sen and Abhijit Banerjee, as well as studies by newspapers and universities on guarantees, Siddaramaiah claimed that these achievements had been accomplished despite what he termed injustice by the Centre.

He said the central govt had caused financial injustice to the state and claimed that shortfalls in GST compensation had resulted in a loss of Rs 12,000-15,000 crore. "We are not getting our rightful share. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, Rs 15,000 crore is yet to be released. If this grant is provided, many development works can be taken up across the state," he said.

Siddaramaiah said his govt had completed two years and nine months in office and it strongly believed in the inclusive development of people of all castes, religions and languages and was committed to reducing inequality.

"Out of the 280 promises made, we have fulfilled 243. The remaining promises will also be fulfilled during the rest of the term," he claimed.

"We are now distributing title deeds to one lakh beneficiaries for the second time through the revenue department. So far, we have created a record by distributing title deeds to 2.2 lakh families," he said.

DCM and state Congress president DK Shivakumar said the state had witnessed major changes over the past 1,000 days and reiterated the govt's commitment to fulfilling promises, controlling price rise, and implementing guarantees. He said Karnataka's guarantee model is now being followed in other states.

CM & DKS share dais but words stay away

CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar shared the dais at the party's 1000-day convention amid power-sharing buzz, but there was no visible interaction between the two leaders during the three-hour event. Siddaramaiah arrived at noon, while Shivakumar reached an hour later. Both leaders were seen speaking to other functionaries but not to each other. Shivakumar unveiled Siddaramaiah's statue at the venue and briefly smiled at him, but did not mention the CM in his speech and left the stage while Siddaramaiah was addressing the gathering.

WHAT'S BREWING? CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar during the 1000-day celebrations of the state govt in Haveri Saturday

Congress govt milestone a tale of thousand lies, claims BJP

Taking a swipe at the Congress govt over its 1,000 days in office and the mega celebration in Haveri, opposition BJP cited a proverb, "telling a hundred lies to solemnise a marriage". BJP Karnataka BJP president BY Vijayendra alleged that the state has gone backward by 20-25 years due to lack of development and accused the govt of indulging in severe corruption. He alleged that Siddaramaiah, who claims to represent Ahinda, is heavily tilted towards minorities. Vijayendra said Siddaramaiah had spent Rs 170 crore on a caste census but discarded the report.

Congress power tussle spills over into cooperative arena

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Bengaluru: The tussle between Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar over the chief minister post has spilled over into the politically influential cooperative sector with the two camps eyeing two key positions — president of Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank and chairman of Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF). Elections to both posts have been delayed due to political and procedural reasons.

> DCM is backing S Ravi for Apex Bank president's position and DK Suresh (in pic) for top KMF post. CM is supporting KN Rajanna and Raghavendra Hitnal for the slots

TURF WAR

Shivakumar is backing his nephew S Ravi, an MLC, for the apex bank post and his brother DK Suresh for the KMF chairman's position, while Siddaramaiah is supporting former cooperation minister KN Rajanna and Koppal MLA Raghavendra Hitnal. The lack of consensus has led to the apex bank election — originally scheduled for Jan 29 — being postponed indefinitely, while the KMF election is likely to be held on March 6. A section of Congress legislators is urging Siddaramaiah to hold polls quickly. "It is unfortunate people are indulging in politics in the cooperative sector, which is meant for the welfare of people in rural areas," said Rajendra Rajanna, Congress MLC and Rajanna's son.

"With Congress enjoying a huge majority, we have a clear chance of winning the apex bank election, but it has been stalled for political reasons. Invisible hands are at play," he said. Sources say AICC general secretary Randeep Surjewala, who oversees Karnataka, is not in favour of Rajanna because the former minister had criticised Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi over the 'vote chori' campaign. That assertion had also cost him his place in the cabinet in Aug last year.

Rajanna is trying to make his way back through the apex bank president's post, which he held between 2001 and 2005. With the high command refusing to budge, Siddaramaiah is said to have got the election postponed. The apex bank board comprises presidents of 21 district cooperative central banks, who elect the president.

Sector holds political significance

Congress has 18 directors, while BJP and JD(S) have two and one respectively, with the election to the Kolar-Chikkaballapur DCCB still pending.

"It is a great opportunity to serve rural masses, so the election must be held without further delay," said Ravi.

The cooperative sector is politically significant in Karnataka, with a cumulative membership of about two crore. More than 5,000 primary agricultural credit cooperative societies (PACS) operate under DCCBs, providing loans worth about Rs 25,000 crore annually to rural borrowers.

Several politicians, including the Jarkiholi brothers, Katti brothers, GT Deve Gowda and Lakshmi Hebbalkar, built their influence through the cooperative network.

KMF, another powerful cooperative body, has about 25 lakh milk producers registered across 16 milk unions. "I am not hankering for the KMF chairman post. It is up to party brass and the govt to decide on it. I will abide by their decision," said Suresh. TNN

Caste survey report by month-end?

Bengaluru: CM Siddaramaiah said Saturday the social and educational survey report would "most likely be submitted by the end of this month or next month," after which the govt would take an appropriate decision.

On the pending Varadariver project, DCM DK Shivakumar said the detailed project report (DPR) had already been prepared and sent to the Centre for approval. According to officials, the Bedti-Varada river linking project is intended to divert 18 tmcft of surplus water from the west-flowing Bedti river basin in Uttara Kannada district to drought-prone eastern districts such as Gadag, Koppal and Raichur. TNN

HDK: Not time to discuss CM post

Bengaluru: Union minister HD Kumaraswamy said it was not the time to discuss who should be the chief minister, stressing that the focus should be on removing what he called a "corrupt and anti-people" govt in Karnataka.

He said talking about leadership now was premature. Kumaraswamy said JD(S) and BJP would work together to bring a pro-people govt and dismissed speculation on alliances. He said alliance talks for local body elections would be held later. TNN

In forest, Budan keeps mobile for emergencies

▸ Continued from page 1

Residents of Ugargol recall that Budan left home about a decade ago. His mother and two brothers still live in the village. "I told my mother, I won't come home," he says, adding that he left home when relatives pressured him to get married. Though the family later let him have his way, he had, by then, adapted fully to a sylvan life.

Despite living in isolation, a mobile phone is one gadget that Budan has kept with himself for emergencies. In the end, whether modern-day Tarzan or solitary seeker, Budan remains a man who chose the wild — and stayed his course.

WILDERNESS TO THE FORE

Berkeley pupil's family approach K'taka govt

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A resident Sreenivasaiah approached the state govt, seeking its intervention in tracing his 22-year-old son, Saketh Sreenivasaiah, who went missing from Berkeley, California, USA, since Feb 12.

STUDENT MISSING

The boy's backpack, with his passport and laptop, was found on a doorstep in the Park Hills neighbourhood and he was last seen in the 1100 block of Dwight Way, according to local media reports.

Sreenivasaiah resides at Srigandada Kaval, west Bengaluru. In his letter, Sreenivasaiah wrote, "Our son, Saketh Sreenivasaiah, is currently pursuing his Master of Science degree at the University of California, Berkeley, California, USA. He has been missing since the morning of Feb 12. His housemate searched all known places and, after confirming that he was not traceable, lodged a formal complaint at Berkeley police station. Police are actively investigating and searching for him; however, his whereabouts remain unknown."

Reacting to his plea, chief secretary Shalini Rajneesh wrote to secretary to Govt of India, Ministry of external affairs, Vikram Misri, stating: "Given the gravity of the situation and the mounting anxiety of his family residing in our state, I request your kind intervention and support. It is requested that the Ministry of external affairs, through the Consulate General of India in San Francisco, extend all necessary assistance, including coordination with local law enforcement and facilitation of support to the family."

The Indian consulate in San Francisco had expressed deep concern about his disappearance. It said in an X post: "The Consulate is in touch with the family and also is in contact with the concerned local authorities to locate the student."

Kerala SIT raids in Ballari

SABARIMALA CASE

Ballari: In connection with the alleged theft of 4.5kg of gold from the Sabarimala Ayyappa Swamy Temple, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) from Kerala carried out raids in Ballari city on Saturday.

According to sources, the five-member team carried out searches at Roddam Jewellers on Bengaluru Road, owned by Govardhan Roddam, and at his residence at Parvati Nagar in the Fort area.

The officials reportedly seized certain documents and gathered details related to the business transactions of Roddam. Bank account details of his family members were also collected. TNN

HC OKs leave-India notice to Oz man

Times News Network

Bengaluru: The high court has held that in cases involving employment visa sponsorship based on an employer's statutory declarations, issuance of a show-cause notice to the employer alone can satisfy the requirements of natural justice.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj made the observation recently while dismissing a petition filed by Christopher Charles Kamolins, an Australian national, who challenged a leave-India notice issued to him on June 18, 2019 by the foreign regional registration office (FRRO). The judge observed that a separate hearing for the employee was not mandated where the determinative facts lay exclusively within the employer's domain.

The petitioner was issued an employment visa in Jan 2018, valid until Jan 7, 2020,

EMPLOYMENT VISA

on the basis of his proposed employment as the general manager of Fisher and Paykel Health Care India Private Ltd, an Indian subsidiary of a multinational company.

Kamolins contended that he had been selected to the post as there was no eligible Indian candidate. He also claimed the leave-India notice was issued without following procedural safeguards and FRRO did not have the authority to issue such notices.

FRRO submitted that the claim made by the petitioner's employer that no qualified Indian was available was proved otherwise by their own subsequent correspondence, and the same constituted suppression or misrepresentation.

FRRO also said the petitioner's qualifications, a bachelor's degree in nursing and a graduate certificate in critical care nursing, did not satisfy the requirements of the general manager's post. "The employment visa framework cannot be exploited as a device to circumvent domestic employment safeguards. The policy objective underlying the visa regime is to preserve employment opportunities for Indian citizens while permitting foreign expertise strictly in cases of genuine requirement," FRRO contended.

Justice Govindaraj noted that the petitioner already exited India based on the leave-India notice and hence the matter was decided only on the question of law. The judge noted that a visa was a conditional permission to enter India and did not confer an indefeasible or vested right to remain for its entire duration. The court noted the foreign regional registration officer, acting as the designated civil authority, possessed statutory jurisdiction to issue a leave-India notice within his territorial jurisdiction.

Justice Govindaraj observed that internal administrative directions need not be published in the official gazette. The impugned leave-India notice did not suffer from arbitrariness or non-application of mind. It was founded on relevant documentary material, including the employer's admission regarding irregular recruitment, and bore a rational nexus to the objective of preserving the integrity of the visa regime. He observed once a foreigner's entry was effected, the regulatory jurisdiction over the person's continued stay vested in domestic authorities.

TIMES TRIBUTE
PAYING HOMAGE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL
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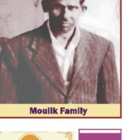

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Springfields Sports Carnival Turns Sport into a COMMUNITY MOVEMENT

If there is one activity that can bring out the child in us, with that unparalleled joy, enthusiasm and adrenaline rush, it must be sports. Given a chance, we would all want to reconnect with the games that we all played as kids – reinvigorating the rules and rhythms, donning those jerseys and tracks that proudly declare our names, putting our best foot forward to the chase of supporters, and losing ourselves in the spirit of the game. This is exactly what 2,000-odd residents of Springfields Apartments found themselves doing at the Springfields Sports Carnival 2025-26. Springfields, a 554-unit complex on Sarjapur road, celebrated this event over an unprecedented three months, with entries across 30 different sports.

The euphoric volleyball winners

First among equals

Our favourite is the story of the 80-plus couple who took part in a Walkathon for the first time in their lives and found a renewed love for walking and their lives. There was women's cricket, where several energetic ladies wielded a cricket bat for the first time ever and rocked it. There were also debut events such as pickleball, dodgeball, throwball, skating, and an inter-apartment tournament with neighbouring Divyasree Elan Apartment. Signature sports such as volleyball, midnight marathon, and walkathon returned after a hiatus, generating immense excitement.

When a 98-year-old became a beacon of inspiration

The oldest participant was two years shy of a century -Bhujanga Bangara Sahan, 98 years young, didn't just inaugurate the Seniors (60+) Walkathon, but also participated with great gusto, inspiring all present. A septuagenarian, a cancer survivor and a Parkinson's patient, turned up for the Walkathon, despite having three teeth extractions the same morning. A new mother found her mojo, playing badminton just three months after having a baby, while Masters (40 plus) outperformed participants half their age in the gym fitness event, with jaw dropping timings, proving again that age is just a number. Off the courts and tracks, there was Srinivasan Santhanam, 77, who checkmated his Gen Alpha rival in chess.

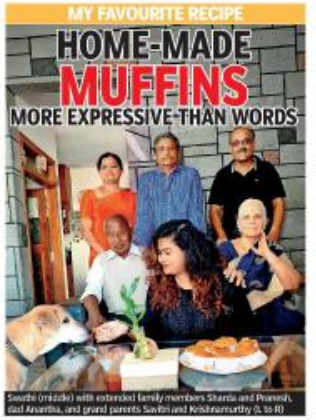
Sports facilities got a makeover

The spectacular event happened through concerted efforts of a sports council, MC team and residents volunteering to rally people as well as update sports facilities in the process. "Every sports facility in the apartment was improved during the events and the carnival concluded at zero net cost to the association, funded purely through resident registrations, stalls, and sponsors," said Ariya Das, chief organiser of Springfield Sports Carnival 2025-2026, who is also an MC member.

As a volunteer quipped, there is no greater joy than seeing residents become active and buddy up with neighbours for play. Isn't that what community spirit is all about?

MY FAVOURITE RECIPE

HOME-MADE MUFFINS MORE EXPRESSIVE THAN WORDS


Swathi (middle) with extended family members Sharda and Pramesh, dad Anantha, and grand parents Savitri and Krishnamurthy (L to R)

Swathi Adiga

Valentine's Day is synonymous with roses and couples, but love is so much more than that.

Sometimes, love is as simple as baking muffins with your mom on a quiet afternoon—measuring flour side by side, laughing when the batter spills, and sneaking a little extra frosting on top. Maybe you're not celebrating anything big. Maybe it's just a good day, or you reached a small goal. But those little moments and celebrations matter. They're what make life sweeter.

Love is also your sibling teasing you, but always protecting you. It is your friend answering your late-night calls. It is your parents worrying about you and supporting you in ways you may not always notice.

There is something special about being grateful for these simple moments. You don't need fancy dinners or expensive gifts. Sometimes a warm kitchen, homemade carrot muffins and shared laughter are enough. These carrot muffins are a quick fix to cure anyone's sweet tooth in a healthy way.

Valentine's Day can be a reminder to appreciate all kinds of love — the romantic kind, yes, but also the quiet, steady love that surrounds us every day. When we celebrate everyone who makes our lives better, the day feels fuller and more meaningful.

INGREDIENTS

- All-purpose flour-1½ cups (166g)
- Sugar (powdered)-3/4 cup (125 gms)
- Vegetable oil- ½ cup (120ml)
- Milk- ½ cup (120ml)
- Grated carrots- 1 cup
- Vinegar- ½ tsp
- Baking powder- ½ tsp
- Baking soda- A pinch
- Vanilla essence-1 tsp
- Cashew and almonds- Optional

METHOD

- Preheat oven to 170°C (338°F).
- Set muffin liners in a tray.
- Mix flour and sugar in a large bowl.
- Add vegetable oil, vinegar and milk, stir until smooth.
- Fold in the grated carrots.
- Fill muffin cups 3/4 full.
- Bake for 15-20 minutes until the tops are golden.
- Allow to cool before serving.

Swathi lives in an independent house in Rajajinagar. She's an equity trader and a freelance financial consultant.

SINGLE'S EVENTS

play wingman as digital Cupid slows down

Dating Apps Are Still Big, But A Growing Number Of Youngsters Are Seeking More Authentic, Interest-Based, And In-Person Connections

Gargi.Deshpande@timesofindia.com

We might have heard the phrase 'There are plenty of fish in the sea.' But when it comes to finding the right kind of fish, everyone is left with only a handful of options, and choosing the best from that lot keeps getting difficult. Youngsters in their early 20s lament that finding the right one is becoming increasingly harder, and that dating apps just aren't meeting their standards anymore.

"Dating apps have too many options, making it that much more difficult to choose the 'right' one. While I did meet decent partners on the app, the bad experiences outweigh the good ones. If I can meet someone in person, instead of going on blind dates with people I find virtually, I would prefer that," says Sameeksha K, 24, a resident of Malleswaram.

For 26-year-old Radha G, who lives on Bannerghatta Road, the most demotivating part of using a dating app has been the 'texting phase'. "Talking to strangers over the apps, and answering the same questions repeatedly, can get overwhelming. So, I keep deleting the apps every once in a while to try a different app. Almost all apps promise something new and end up being the same."

Finding a partner on apps is outdated. Bengaluru embraces new trends in a heartbeat. So, singles mixer events are getting popular across the city, especially in Feb.

Singles Mixer Event held at The Godown Gaming Zone

Brunch organised by RSVP Escape at Bastian Garden City, St Marks Road

Back to offline connections

Dating life has come full circle from Gen Xers finding someone to date in their social circle to millennials exploring dating apps, to Gen Z now wanting to meet strangers physically for better connection.

Priscilla Priyadharshini, co-founder of gaming lounge The Godown, says they noticed that while dating apps were everywhere, people still craved physical connection and organic, low-pressure ways to connect offline. "The singles mixer event at The Godown was our way of creating a comfortable, structured environment where conversations flow naturally," she says.

Her co-founder in the venture, Raunaq Vermani, says dating apps solve discovery at scale, but they cannot create energy, body language, and spontaneity. "People don't just want matches, they want experiences," he says.

Experiences are what Payal Kothari is also trying to provide to singles. Her RSVP Escape has been quietly reshaping the dating landscape in the city through her invite-only inner circle dinners and curated brunches. Payal brings together singles for an evening designed around conversation, chemistry and connection. In a world driven by algorithms and endless 'talking stages', she ensures you find depth over volume, where conversations flow organically.

Each guest is personally screened. The idea is that everyone in the room must be there with intention. The events are for those who are done with the swipe culture and ready to meet people who show up — in real time and with real intent.

> Dating online is always a gamble. It is always a cloak-and-dagger situation, where you are left guessing if it is indeed the real deal. And reading about all the cons on the internet, staying offline feels safer. Also, I feel genuine connections are made when the other person is not hiding behind a screen.
>
> **Veer Singh, 30** | WRITER

> The quantity on dating apps may be never-ending, but when it comes to quality, only a select few luck out. The rest of us hardly find what we are looking for. But, when we go out on speed-dating events or singles mixers, the ice breaking becomes more interesting, and putting a face to someone you are getting to know helps build trust on a different level.
>
> **Samhita, 23** | STUDENT

> Dating apps can't show intention. You can't sense energy or road integrity in a bio. Real connection engages all five senses, and we help evoke these while honoring the sixth: intuition.
>
> **Payal Kothari** | FOUNDER, RSVP ESCAPE

> I have decided to go to speed-dating events for the first time, and finally go out and meet real people without any filters. I did make great connections here and came out with something positive.
>
> **Salish Singh, 32** | FOUNDER

DEAR READER If you have done something in your locality, apartment complex or home that others can benefit from, do write to **timesofindia.com**, with your photo.

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Lesson 4 Quiz

SECTION 1 : FILL IN THE BLANKS

S.No.	Questions
1	nimma kelasa _____ ? a) aayitaa b) hEgide c) mugitaa d) all of these
2	traffic-nalli sikkaapattu _____ (de..a) maNa b) daari c) dhoDu d) all of these
3	pradEshadhoDu _____ a) maaDisu b) muguisu c) seeru d) none of these
4	avarinda kelasa _____ a) baresu b) Odisu c) maaDisu d) both b & C
5	maneyoLi jaDara baLe _____ (de..a) OdiaNi turisa c) jaavaLi d) Both b and c
6	nimma aDuge-mane _____ (de..a) chikkaadu b) doDDa-daagi c) chennaagi d) all of these
7	nanage ivattu sikkaapaTTe ____ (de..a) haNa b) kelasa c) traffic d) all of these
8	nimma mane _____ naLi turisa ____ (ve..a) temaru, pot gaLu b) hittalu, gidaci hittali, g) Dagalu d) both a and c
9	baTTe-gaLannu ____ nAginisu a) horage b) oLage c) chennaagi d) all of these
10	oLLe _____ (de, _____ oNagisu a) male, baTTeb) bisilu, baTTec) chaLi, baTTed) All of these
11	nela _____, turisa galeej-aagide..a) nODisu b) baarisu c) oresu d) maagisu
12	naaru _____ maaDi haruttine, neenu ready maaDu..a) nODi, OOi bi aatu-aaDi, ooT-akke c) snaana, tinDi d) both b and c
13	nanage-kannaDa bhaashe kaliyOke _____ a) baNuttebi b) iSHTa c) hOgutte d) none of these
14	g) Dakkeneenu _____ a) kudisu b) tOraisu c) haaku d) kaLage
15	kasahoruge ____ kasada dabbige ____ a) OLi, bOku b) haaku, iDu
16	c) chelia-bEDaa, hazaku d) all of these
17	illi dinasa kasada gaaDi __ ? a) haantu b) baruttaa c) hoytu d) all of these
18	naste-yaali ____ gunDigaLive, eccharikeLe ttara b) tumbaa c) aaLada dEvitha a ...
19	baTTe _____ yakke haaku..a) toLi b) nooru c) ogi d) both a & c
20	BengaLoonali _____ jaasti, haagaagi _____ iruttte..a) hasiru, tampaagi b) gIDa-gaLu, taNNage c) bisilu, taNNage d) both a & b
21	sari, ivattige _____ saaku, naaLe maitte _____ a) inoo, bOku b) bOku, ImEti-yaagONa c) iSHTu, sigONa d) all of these

Exercises: Section 2

Translate the following sentences into Kannada. Read out the sentences, record your voice, and upload the recording by scanning the QR code below by Feb 15, 2026(Sunday), 11:59pm. Top three submissions will be recognized next week.

1. Please come tomorrow evening.
2. There is too much traffic today.
3. There are a lot of trees in Bengaluru.
4. I need to go home early today.
5. Where are you going?

Note: Answer keys for this lesson will be published next week.

Answer keys for previous lesson (Lesson 4 Part E)

Section 1: Match the following

K1-E4, K2-E2, K3-E6, K4-E1, K5-E7, K6-E9, K7-E8, K8-E3, K9-E5

Winners of the contest (Lesson 4B Section)

Lokapriya M, Tom M, Chethan N

This 83-year-old is a proud nerd, securing distinction in her Sanskrit exam

Mini.Thomas@timesofindia.com

Sathya Subbaiah, an 83-year-old from Hebbal, has never been to a college or university. Attending classes and taking exams seemed like a distant dream for her until recently. During the pandemic, she started learning Sanskrit and has passed four levels with distinction.

Sathya studies Sanskrit through online institutions—Saraswati Sabha (Malleswaram) and Tattvaloka (Chennai)—attending three sessions per week from each. "I study for 3-6 hours daily," says Sathya, who was primarily a homemaker all her life.

As the oldest student in the class, she has become an inspiration to many of her classmates. While studying, she becomes fully immersed, ignoring phone calls and social media, says Sahana Mohan, her daughter. "The other day, she called me asking me to wish her good luck for the exam," says Sahana. "She was full of joy and excitement while going to the exam hall. Her month-long preparations included not just studies but also collecting stationery, including pencils and erasers," she recalls.

Learning the ancient language keeps Sathya connected to her roots. It has also given her a sense of purpose at an age when one may not have much to look forward to. "Sanskrit is a complex language. It has sharpened my memory and grasping power. Now I feel more confident in chanting slokas," she smiles.

Residents help low-income workers & street vendors access govt schemes

Residents of Sowmya Springs Apartment in Basavanagudi stepped up as volunteers to help street vendors and other low-income workers access government-backed financial welfare schemes, addressing a persistent gap caused by lack of awareness and limited access.

With support from Sharada Educational Trust (NGO), we organised a Financial Literacy and Inclusion workshop on Sunday, Feb 1, 2026, at MN Krishna Rao Park, opposite the apartment.

The programme drew over 80 participants, including street vendors, domestic workers, hawkers and security personnel. NGO volunteers conducted free interactive sessions on govt welfare schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, PMJJBY, PMSBY, PMJAY, Atal Pension Yojana and MUDRA loans, using simple, real-life examples to explain benefits and eligibility.

The initiative focused on last-mile support beyond awareness. After the session, participants received hands-on assistance at a private bank's Basavanagudi branch, where Harige'iya Varriar and Shravani helped with account openings, documentation and scheme applications.

Nearly 40 participants, mostly women, were successfully enrolled as beneficiaries, highlighting how community-led efforts can convert policy intent into real outcomes.

Apartments or community groups interested in conducting similar programmes can write to **arvind@sharadatrust.org.**

Arvind Kamath | RESIDENT, SOWMYA SPRINGS APARTMENT, BASAVANAGUDI, AND FOUNDER OF SHARADA EDUCATIONAL TRUST, MN NGO

EMAILS FROM READERS

SRI SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA TEMPLE TRUST

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Mahashivarathri Pooje

On Sunday, 15th February 2026

-: Programme :-

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Annadanam : 6.00 a.m. to Midnigh 12.00

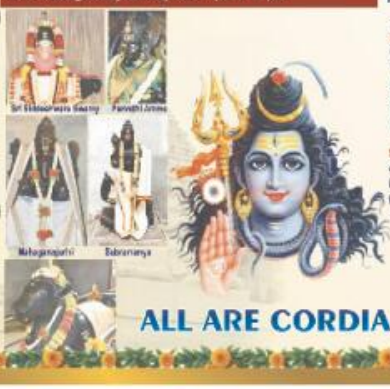
SRI SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA CONVENTION HALL

The poor below the poverty line will be provided with a free 'golden thali' on the day of the wedding at our wedding hall. Food will be provided from 1 pm to 10 pm on that day. Additionally, hall booking is free for the poor below the poverty line. You can book a hall for your home or office functions. Like the Karnataka Dharmasthala temple, the temple offers food offerings every Monday from 1 pm to 10 pm.

The Temple is being constructed by Sri. **M.RAJSHEKAR**-B.com, a Retired Income Tax Officer and his Wife **Smt.S. RANJINIAMMAL** is the **PRESIDENT TRUST OF THE TEMPLE** and **Sri. M.RAJASHEKAR** is the Managing Trustee o' the temple. **Mr. M.RAJASHEKAR** was born in a Agriculture family at Lakkavalli, Tarekere Taluk, Chikkamangalur District Karnataka.

The Entire Family of **Mr. M.RAJASHEKAR** is strong devotee of LORD SHIVA. This temple is the outcome inspiration of **Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR** and his **Wife Smt. S. RANJINIAMMAL** when they visited **Sri. BRIDESHWARA TEMPLE** situated at **TANJORE**, Tamil Nadu. After seeing this temple in Tanjore they decided to construct an identical Temple in their land situated at Attibele measuring 6 and half acres which was previously owned by the family of Honorable the **PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA Sri. H.D.DEVE GOWDAJI** and he his also a strong devotee of this temple.

The estimated construction of this temple is Forty Five Crores and the entire coast of Sixty Four Crores is being borne by **Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR** and his wife **Smt. S. RANJINIAMMAL**. The **BHOOMI POOJA** of the temple was performed by on 27th February 2014, the construction work is going on continuously and now it is at the stage of completion, the entire Temple is being constructed by using STONE with good culture having spiritual background.



At present 63 feet **RAJA GOPURAM** is constructed and Erection with worth of Rupees Nine Lakhs Navarathan on December 25th 2021. Within a due course the compound wall of is and a half feet will be completed. And on 1 of March 2022, Erection of Kalasha on the Gopuram at 11.00am Onwards. Everyday 500 devotees are visiting the temple, and especially on Monday nearly 1000 to 3000 devotees are visiting the temple to the Blessing of **LORD Sri Sri Sri SIDDESHWARA**.

Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR and his wife **Smt. S.RANJINIAMMAL** wishes to perform **KUMBHABHISHEKAM** very shortly with the presene of the Hon'ble **PRESIDENT OF INDIA** and **PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA**. Any person visits the temple will realize the aforesaid events in their life also On 15-01-2025 we are open **SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA CONVENTION HALL (Kalyana Mantapa)**, we decided to give free for poor people on the occasion of marriage and temple will provide Mangalya and free Annadhana from 1.00pm Onwards Every Monday Annachana will be giving to all people from 1.00pm Onwards like Dharmasthala.

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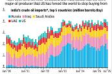

*Monthly average crude oil imports of seaborne shipments only Source: FT

Bengal voter list may shrink by at least 68L from 2024 LS polls

SIR Hearings End; Dec 16 Draft Excluded 58L, Final Rolls On Feb 28

Kaushik.Pradhan
@timesofindia.com

An EC official said 1.5 crore voters had logical discrepancies or were marked unmapped in the draft list and needed to attend hearings

Kolkata: Bengal's voter count is likely to shrink by at least 68 lakh, or about 9%, from what it was in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The final list after special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls is scheduled to be published on Feb 28.

The state's draft SIR list, published on Dec 16, had around 7.1 crore electors after excluding a little over 58 lakh ASD (absent, shifted, dead/duplicate) voters. Election Commission sources said about 10 lakh more names are set to be excluded.

A senior EC official said 1.5 crore voters were identified with logical discrepancies or marked unmapped in the draft list and needed to attend in-person hearings. Of them, 3.6 lakh voters could not be handed over notices because BLOs failed to locate them.

"These 3.6 lakh electors will be excluded from the final roll straightaway. Additionally, about 5.2 lakh voters received the hearing notices but did not appear before EROs/AEROs till 2pm on Saturday. Their names will also be excluded," the EC official said.

At the document-verification stage that followed hearings, another 1.6 lakh names were marked "ineligible". "Therefore, the number of electors will go down by at least 10.4 lakh in the final roll," the official said.

In a meeting with the Bengal chief electoral officer, special roll observers and district magistrates on Friday, the poll panel flagged several cases where newspaper clippings, blank pages or invisible images had been uploaded on to the system and even verified. "Around 15-20 such cases were shown to DMs and central observers through a PowerPoint presentation. All such cases will be scrutinised during the super-checking exercise. Therefore, the number of ineligible electors may go up further," another EC official said.

In the period between the publication of the draft roll on Dec 16 and Jan 19, EC received 7.4 lakh Form 6/6A submissions, both online and offline, from persons seeking enrolment as new voters in Bengal. Also, 42,601 Form 7 submissions were made for deletion of names from the electoral roll due to death or change of address. More than 5.4 lakh Form 8 applications were submitted for update and minor corrections in EPIC. "All these forms will be disposed of before the publication of the final roll," the official said.

According to EC's timetable, documents submitted by voters during hearings have to be scrutinised and verified by Feb 21. Disposal of cases, too, need to be completed by the same date. Rationalisation of polling stations must take place by Feb 25 before the publication of the final roll three days later.

Top court: Lapse lies squarely at door of investigating agency

▸Continued from page 1

LEGAL CLARITY

On appeal, the case remained pending for a decade in the SC before getting listed for final hearing before a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan, which reserved the verdict on Aug 21 last year. On Friday, after nearly six months, Justice Mahadevan pronounced the judgment acquitting the accused.

At a time when the SC is frowning at the HCs for keeping the judgments reserved for long and the delay in delivery of justice, this is a classic case of both ailments present with the SC itself.

Justice Mahadevan said, "Both the trial court and the HC held that the appellants (accused) failed to furnish any satisfactory explanation or documentary justification for such possession (of cement bags). These findings are essentially factual and are supported by the evidence on record."

Despite the evidence against the accused, the bench of Justices Nagarathna and Mahadevan acquitted the accused saying the prosecution charged them under provisions of Essential Commodities Act when on the date of siphoning off cement, it was not a commodity covered under that law.

"That said, this was a case where the investigating agency ought to have invoked appropriate provisions of the Indian Penal Code, having regard to the nature of the allegations and the evidence collected," it said and acquitted the accused saying, "The lapse, therefore, lies squarely at the door of the investigating agency."

Right to privacy not absolute in divorce case: HC

Partha.Behera
@timesofindia.com

The court ruled that WhatsApp chats and call recordings could be admitted as evidence

Raipur: Chhattisgarh HC has held that WhatsApp chats and call recordings can be admitted as evidence in matrimonial disputes, even if obtained illegally, provided they are relevant and genuine.

The HC on Feb 11 dismissed a petition filed by a woman challenging a Raipur family court order that allowed her husband to submit mobile recordings and WhatsApp messages in their divorce case. Justice Sachin Singh Rajput held that the right to privacy was not absolute and must yield to the right of a fair trial in matrimonial disputes.

The husband sought divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. The wife objected, alleging that he had hacked her phone and accessed data unlawfully, violating her fundamental right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution. However, the family court permitted the electronic evidence on Dec 12, 2024, prompting her to approach the high court.

Examining the scope of Section 14 of the Family Courts Act, 1984, the HC noted that family courts were empowered to receive any material that assisted in effective adjudication, even if it may otherwise be inadmissible under the Indian Evidence Act. The court described the Act as a special law intended to relax strict evidentiary rules in sensitive personal disputes such as divorce.

The HC observed excluding relevant evidence at the threshold could undermine the cause of justice and relevance was the primary test of admissibility in such cases. The court also relied on Supreme Court's ruling in Vibhor Garg versus Neha which held spousal communications in disputes between married partners do not enjoy absolute privilege when essential for adjudication.

Upholding the family court's order, the HC dismissed the woman's petition, while clarifying that the husband must still prove the authenticity of the electronic evidence during trial.

With no dowry case in a decade, Bihar's Tharu community rewrites social norms

Dilip Kumar | TNN

More than 500 marriages take place within this community, concentrated in a cluster of villages along the Nepal border, each year

Bettiah: At a time when dowry cases continue to reach police stations and courts across the country, a community in Bihar's West Champaran presents a striking counterpoint — not a single dowry-related complaint has been registered by its members in over a decade.

This is not a coincidence but a social design in the Tharu community, concentrated in a cluster of villages in Bagaha's Gobarhiya, along the Nepal border.

Mahendra Mahato, secretary of Bharatiya Tharu Kalyan Mahasangh and gumasta (clan head), said, "Taking dowry is considered a sin in our community. If any family is accused of such transactions, a meeting is convened to investigate the matter and a panchayat is held under the chairmanship of the gumasta. If found guilty, punishments ranging from financial penalties to even social boycott are imposed."

In effect, the Tharus have criminalised dowry within their own moral framework. Social sanction works faster than formal complaints.

The Tharus number around three lakh. More than 500 marriages take place within the community each year. The rule is consistent: the groom's family does not demand dowry, nor does the bride's family offer it.

Bagaha SP Ramanand Kaushal confirmed no cases of dowry or related harassment of women have been reported during the last decade from the 20-22 Tharu villages in the area. He described the community as a peaceful and responsible one, setting an example to wider society. Even domestic disputes, Kaushal said, were generally resolved amicably in the presence of the gumasta.

Sharda Prasad, president of Tharu Kalyan Bauddhik Vichar Manch, said marriage was regarded a union ordained by God, and both bride and groom were worshipped during the ceremony.

Kusumi Devi said while dowry was prohibited, voluntary gifts may be given and relatives often shared wedding expenses. "We treat our daughter-in-law like our own daughter," she said.

Many Tharu families now have doctors, engineers, administrators and bankers within their ranks. "Despite changes in education, lifestyle and food habits, we have preserved our traditions and remained untouched by the dowry system. As debates on reform continue, the Tharu experience suggests that durable change may come not only through law, but through collective resolve," said Maheshwar Kazi, a resident of Naurangiya, a Tharu village.

Accused told to surrender before court within 4 weeks

▸Continued from page 1

Justice Bishnoi, who wrote the judgment, said, "An absconder is not entitled to the relief of anticipatory bail as a general rule, however, in certain exceptional cases, where on a perusal of the FIR, case diary and other relevant materials on record, the court is of the prima facie opinion that no case is made out against the absconding accused, then the power of granting anticipatory bail may be exercised in favour of the absconding accused."

The court noted that the accused was part of a mob who had not only absconded from the investigations but had also threatened to kill the injured person, an eyewitness, for opposing his bail plea. The bench said acquittal of co-accused thus cannot be a ground to grant him anticipatory bail as he had failed to cooperate with probe and delayed the trial of other co-accused by absconding.

"Granting the relief of anticipatory bail to an absconding accused person sets a bad precedent and sends a message that the law-abiding co-accused persons who stood trial, were wrong to diligently attend the process of trial and further, incentivises people to evade the process of law with impunity," the SC said.

The bench directed the accused to surrender before the trial court within four weeks and seek regular bail, which would be decided in accordance with law.

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DMK man gets 2-yr jail for obscene speech against guv

Chennai: A DMK functionary J Sivaji Krishnamoorthy has been awarded two years in jail for making obscene and derogatory remarks against Tamil Nadu governor R N Ravi and several political leaders during a public meeting, **reports Selvaraj A**. The 10th metropolitan magistrate at Egmore, P Revathi, also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000.

At a public meeting organised by DMK in Erukkancheri on June 18, 2023, Sivaji used derogatory language in his speech while referring to the governor, actor-turned-politician Khushbu Sundar, leader of opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami, former BJP state president K Annamalai and ex-minister D Jayakumar.

Modi deplanes on Northeast India's first highway airstrip

Rajib Dutta & Prabin Kalita | TNN

Dibrugarh/Guwahati: PM Narendra Modi landed on the Northeast's first emergency landing facility, a highway airstrip at Moran in Assam's Dibrugarh district, and rolled out a package of infrastructure projects worth more than Rs 5,500 crore across the poll-bound state, spanning defence preparedness, connectivity, education and digital capacity.

Modi flew in from Chabua airfield Saturday aboard an IAF C-130J, touching down on the 4.2km, specially reinforced stretch of the Moran bypass built at a cost of Rs 100 crore. Designed for dual civil-military use, the emergency landing facility doubles as a national highway and can serve as a backup to Dibrugarh airport during natural disasters or conflict.

PM Modi being felicitated by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati, Saturday

Officials said the strip can handle fighter aircraft up to 40 tonnes and transport planes up to 74 tonnes maximum take-off weight, strengthening rapid deployment and relief operations in a sensitive region close to the Chinese border.

The PM's landing was followed by a 40-minute IAF aerial display underscoring the strip's operational readiness. Sukhoi Su-30MKI and Rafale fighters conducted take-offs and landings. An-32 transports showcased short-field operations, and advanced light helicopters simulated humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions. Garud Commandos rappelled onto the strip in a demonstration.

Later in Guwahati, Modi inaugurated the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu, a six-lane, 7.75km concrete bridge over the Brahmaputra built at a cost of Rs 3,030 crore. The bridge, the first of its kind in the NE, cuts travel time between Guwahati and North Guwahati to about seven minutes from roughly 30 via the Saraighat bridge. Designed for high seismicity, it uses friction pendulum bearings and a real-time bridge health monitoring system. Modi had laid the foundation stone in Feb 2019.

3 devotees from K'taka killed in car crash en route to Srisailam temple

Times News Network

Hyderabad: Three devotees from Karnataka died and seven of their relatives suffered injuries when their four-wheeler rammed into a road-side culvert in Nagar Kurnool district Saturday. The victims from Vijayapura district were en route to Srisailam Mallikarjuna Swamy temple to celebrate Mahashivaratri festival when the accident occurred.

According to Urkonda sub-inspector (SI) P Krishna Deva, the deceased were identified as Ram Reddy Desai, 52, a businessman, his wife Megha Desai, 38, and their relative Mahadevi, 68. The three victims along with 11 others in two vehicles started from Kallikeri village in Vijayapura district of Karnataka on Friday night to go to Srisailam.

Around 2.30am when they reached Timmapally village in Nagar Kurnool district, one of the vehicles crashed into a road-side culvert on the left side. All the 10 people in the vehicle, including driver Raju, suffered injuries. Their relatives travelling in the vehicle ahead stopped immediately. With the help of passers-by, the injured were rushed to a nearby private hospital in Veldanda. "Three of the injured succumbed while undergoing treatment," Urkonda SI P Krishna Deva said. Among the seven injured, there are two women. "The condition of the injured is stable," the SI said.

Police performed breath analyser test on Raju, who had sustained injuries, and he tested negative. Police suspected that Raju might have dozed off and the vehicle might have crashed into the culvert. "All the victims are relatives and they were going to Srisailam for darshan on Sunday for Shivaratri festival," Kalwakurthy circle inspector (CI) Nagarjuna said.

On the complaint of the victims' family member, K Gouda, Urkonda police registered a case under sections 106 (1) (causing death by negligence) and 125 (a) (causing hurt by an act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The bodies were handed over to their families.

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personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shenoy Arvind Chidananda, S/o Chidananda Shenoy Kamp, residing at D403, Celestial Greens, Old Madras Road, C.V.Raman Nagar, Bangalore 560093, have changed name to Arvind Chidanand Shenoy vide affidavit: IN-KA78765541621988T dated 11/02/26 before Notary Public Mr. Uday Kumar K.

I, SHASHI KUMAR K S, S/o Siddagangaiah, R/at No. 80, Kallegowdanapalya, VTC: Kitteeahalli, PO: Kitteeahalli, Bengaluru-562130 have changed my name to SHASHI KUMARA K S, Vide affidavit dt:13.02.2026 Notary Rajeshwari, Bangalore.

I, Kiran Patil K M, Kiran Patil, Pattenahalli, Bengalore 78, have changed my minor daughter's name from "PRAGNYA K PATIL" to "PARNIKA K PATIL" for all future purposes.

LOST & FOUND

I, Kankanalapati Krishna Chaitanya (GPA Holder) have Lost My Original Sale deed documents Situated in Sebangur Village of Hosur Taluk, Krishnagiri Dist., Doc No - 63/2005, Sy No - 81/1C (Area Extend 3000 Sqft), Sy No - 81/3 (Area Extend 3300 Sqft) (Total Area Extend 5800 Sqft), Site No - 60, (Present BBO Register) While Some Personal Work in B'lore Near Bharathi Nagar. Case No - 2040595/2026, Sakala No - P00122200080497, Aff No - IN KA-74054658411397Y. Finder Please Contact or Return to This Address, Kankanalapati Krishna Chaitanya, Res/At.702, Balaji Monarc Apts, 4th Cross A sector, Amruth Nagar, B'lore, Phone - 8050012886.

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IIT Council discusses student mobility plan

▶ Continued from page 1

We recently had a meeting of academic deans from all the IITs, organised by IIT Madras," said Prof Prathap Haridoss, dean (academics), IITM. "Among several issues discussed, one important topic was credit transfer and student mobility across IITs."

To date, as Prof Haridoss explained, "One major reason large-scale transfers have not been permitted is the issue of rank integrity: students were originally allotted seats based on rank-specific constraints, and allowing arbitrary transfers could violate that framework."

However, the plan to allow student movement was discussed in the IIT Council and a decision taken to seek approval from the respective senates of individual IITs. This will convert campuses operating parallely into a network that allows students to move between institutes. "There is growing recognition that students increasingly move across locations for internships, training, and other academic or professional engagements," said Prof Haridoss. In such cases, it would be useful to allow students from one IIT to take courses at another IIT during the same period. For example, if a student needs to be physically present in Mumbai for an internship, they could potentially take courses at IIT Bombay during that semester, Prof Haridoss added.

The IITs are therefore working towards creating a "structured mechanism" for semester-based mobility among these campuses, where students can spend a term at another IIT, earn credits there, and have those credits transferred back; "similar to how semester exchange programmes currently operate with foreign universities". "This would initially be implemented in a limited, controlled manner," Prof Haridoss added.

Each IIT would decide how many visiting students it can host at any given time, based on infrastructure and capacity constraints.

HC: Married status no bar to compassionate appointment

Lalmohan Patnaik | TNN

Cuttack: Marriage cannot be a ground for disqualifying daughters from seeking employment on compassionate grounds, Orissa high court has observed, quashing the rejection of a woman's claim by authorities and directed the state govt to provide her an appropriate job within eight weeks.

A compliance report must be filed before the HC registrar general within two weeks. Justices Krishna Shripad Dixit and Chittaranjan Dash said in their Feb 5 order. Thereafter, "delay would attract additional levy of Rs 500 per day and shall be payable to the daughter, who is in her early 40s. That amount be recovered personally from the erring officials of the department, in accordance with law", the court said.

HC notice to AAP MP over RS election plea

Ajay.Sura@timesofindia.com

Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana HC has issued a notice to industrialist Rajender Gupta, AAP's Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, on a plea challenging his election to the Upper House.

The election petition, filed by Narnaut Chaturvedi, alleges corrupt practices, including undue influence and misuse of state machinery during the election process. Chaturvedi was also a contender but his nomination was rejected on grounds that signatures of AAP MLAs he had submitted were forged.

The petitioner alleges improper rejection of his nomination papers. He claimed although he spent 70 days in judicial custody, state failed to prove the authenticity of signatures in related proceedings, and asked how the returning officer (RO) determined the genuineness of signatures within minutes during formal scrutiny. Justice Sanjay Vashisht issued the notice after taking cognisance of Chaturvedi's petition that seeks directions to declare Gupta's election void.

In a first, space PSU Nsil to distribute private firm GalaxEye's satellite data

Chethan.Kumar@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Bengaluru-based space start-up GalaxEye has signed a channel partnership agreement with Space PSU NewSpace India Limited (Nsil), marking the first time the State-owned company has partnered with a domestic private player to distribute satellite data.

Under the agreement, Nsil will resell high-resolution OptoSAR data generated by GalaxEye's own satellites. GalaxEye's upcoming spacecraft will be folded into what the founder described as a "virtual constellation", allowing Nsil to plug data gaps in its current offerings. "Nsil will resell our data. From now on, whatever satellites we launch, Nsil becomes a reseller for that data," GalaxEye co-founder and CEO Suyash Singh told TOI. The first satellite — "Drishti" — in GalaxEye's planned 10-satellite constellation is scheduled to leave for launch on Feb 25. The company plans to deploy all 10 spacecraft over the next four years. The current agreement is structured to cover the entire planned constellation, meaning Nsil can distribute data from each satellite as it comes online.

In practical terms, Nsil will function as an extended sales arm for the start-up. It will be able to market raw data as well as downstream products built by GalaxEye. The arrangement also allows Nsil to directly sell the satellite data to its own customer base, which includes govt agencies and commercial clients.

Drishti, which is expected to launch aboard a SpaceX mission, weighs 160-kg and is pegged to be India's largest privately built commercial satellite. While GalaxEye, through contracts with Ananth Technologies and XDLINX procured the satellite bus, the firm said the spacecraft will carry its proprietary "SyncFused OptoSAR" technology, combining optical and synthetic aperture radar data on a single platform. From the second satellite GalaxEye is expected to build its own satellite buses too.

About one cubic metre in size with a 3.5-metre deployable antenna, Drishti will offer 1.5-metre resolution imagery and a global revisit time of seven to ten days. The data is aimed at defence, border surveillance, disaster response, infrastructure monitoring, agriculture, and financial risk assessment.

GalaxEye has completed around 500 aerial test flights and earlier flew a payload on Isro's PSLV mission. The structural model was recently tested at Isro's UR Rao Satellite Centre.

IISc study shows how staph bacteria punch holes in blood cells

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A team from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has captured, in rare detail, how a toxin produced by the common staph bacterium drills holes into human blood cells — a key step in severe infections.

"Staphylococcus aureus" — a leading cause of bacterial-associated morbidity worldwide — is a familiar name in hospitals, where drug-resistant strains have made treatment harder. One reason the bacterium is so damaging is a toxin called alpha-hemolysin. It attacks cell membranes, the thin protective layer that keeps a cell intact. Once that barrier is breached, the cell leaks and dies. Researchers led by Somnath Dutta at IISc's molecular biophysics unit wanted to see exactly how this happens in real cells. Earlier studies had examined the toxin in artificial membranes made in the laboratory. This time, the team studied its action on actual red blood cells. The research was published in the Journal of Cell Biology.

Using high-resolution imaging techniques, including cryo-electron microscopy and fluorescence microscopy, they tracked the toxin as it assembled on the cell surface. Instead of forming a pore in one sudden move, the protein built itself in stages.

It first appeared as small arc-like clusters, then as larger ring-shaped groupings, before finally forming a complete channel that punched through the membrane. The scientists also observed subtle changes in the shape of the blood cell as the attack progressed, offering clues to how the membrane gives way.

Taken together, the study provides a structure-function explanation of how an arc-shaped intermediate assembly transitions into a fully formed pore while interacting closely with the cell membrane.

By capturing these intermediate stages in native red blood cells, the researchers offer a clearer framework for designing inhibitors and vaccine strategies that specifically target alpha-hemolysin-driven cell damage. The findings could guide efforts to design drugs or vaccines that block the toxin before it forms a pore.

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MATRIMONIALS

WANTED BRIDES

BY CASTE

AGARWAL-BISA

28/5'10 B.TECH IIT MBA-IIM, wrks with MNC ... No demand ...

BRAHMIN

SEEKING alliance match for Delhi based Maithil Brahmin Boy Sandilya Gotra, 34/5'10" MBA working in an Indian MNC (IT Sector), native place Godda Dist., Jharkhand. Looking for educated and beautiful preferably working Girl. Mobile-9811213079

WANTED a bride for Graduate 1994 Born Kannada Madhwa boy Haritha Gothram, Uthra star, working in Tech Mahendra, Chennai. Any Brahmin graduate Girl ok.

WANTED any brahmin bride for 34 yrs/Smartha Deshatha Marathi/Vashistha/Gt/Doctor/Cardiologist/Corporate Hospital/Hyderabad/Never Married/Own House

GAUR BRAHMIN Mglk boy 13/5/93, 5'6", BE chemical, wkg IT, Bangalore 65 LPA, Father Dr. Mother Gztd. Offr Only bed Bhopal. Seeks edu. suitable girl.

ALLIANCE invited from girls of any State for our son 1988 born B.Com MBA ... doing business in pondicherry ...

DOUBLE Masters Engineering 40 Divorced No Issues Tamil Brahmin WORKING Top USA CO Coming India Feb

27/180/ V.Fair/Poosam/Vadalem/ Ayyangar (V) B.Tech MBA, Analyst in US, Seeks Suitable Bride Same Sect Empd in US/India.

DELHI bsd H'Some Mishra ... Left foot corrected. No Dowry/Caste no bar ...

KAYASTHA

B.TECH /MBA boy 95/5'10". Wkg MNC Bangalore 35 LPA. Seeks Prof. Qual. Wkg. girl.

BENGALI Kayastha, 30/ 5.2", Deva Gana, B.Tech, Working in MNC Bangalore with 15 LPA ,Educated, Fair, Pretty bride required.

WANTED working girl for 34, non.m kyath boy 5.6.6ft working as Senior Creative Officer in New Delhi.

SUITABLE Match for handsome Kayasth boy from reputed family B. Tech, MBA ... Sr Manager 30/5'10" U/C No Bar

KHATRI

PQMF M.Tech ... Hindu Punjabi ... Sr Manager IT Bangalore ...

40/5'8" TALL divorcee belongs to high status family prefer middle and upper cast and beautiful very fair bride

KUSHWAHA

KUSHWAHA H'some Boy 27/5'7"MCA Engr Google Banglr 25 LPA Seeks B'ful Wkg girl

TAMIL IYER

CHENNAI propertied unmarried Iyer male 53/180 MA DFT seeks any graduate brahmin woman except divorcees

TAMIL MUDALIAR

MUDALIYAR 33yr,170cm B.Tech M.sc 60 LPA Job in Germany Heavathy Moonam Seeks Educated Humble Bride

TAMIL VANNIYAR

MANIKANDAN 36 vanniyar work Navy Ship Technician Vizag. Wanted Bride ITI,Diploma, Degree

BY COMMUNITY

AGARWAL

SMART Gupta (Vaishya) 35/5'9" MBA 55LPA Associate Director Analytics working in Banglore UP Based family seeks Bride MBA, B.Tech.

27/5'8" Garg fair BTech IITK, MS UCLA, Sr. Data Scientist Micron, HIR, Parents Drs. seeks Passionate educated girl. No barrier.

SMART Varshney (Vaishya) Manglik, 29/5'9", B.Tech from BITS Pilani, posted as IT Officer in Bank of Baroda, Mumbai, seeks PG ... All Vaishya are invited. Send biodata on email

BY PROFESSION

DOCTORS

DM Doctor (Dec-81,6'1", Tamil) seeks a tall, v.fair, virtuous PG Doctor/non-medico age around 30 yrs at Bangalore

BRIDE for 36 Yr, 5'9" Dr. Son (MBBS Gold Medalist, Pursuing MD) ...

GOVERNMENT/ DEFENCE

BOY is working in Railways 5'4"/35, mom is retd govt officer, looking for govt employee girl working in B'lore, no dowry

SOFTWARE PROFESSIONAL

29G/ 5'8" BITS Pilani Grad, Software Engineer Amazon Pkg: 80L+, Veg/Teetotaler, Own Villa Bengaluru.

BY RELIGION

MUSLIM

SUNNI 38 Y USA MIM Graduate & B.Tech (Mech) owning business in USA & UAE seeks convent educated bride willing to settle abroad. Educated & Reputed Family background is a Must. Whatsapp biodata to +918830484108

ALLIANCE invited for SHIA MUSLIM Boy 6 Feet, Fair, Handsome 34 Years, Senior Management Position, Financially well secure, Good Family background and values. Looking for Well Educated, Good looking SHIA GIRL

GENERAL

CASTE NO BAR

WANTED: Homely, educated girl For 36 Tech Engineer, 6'2", UK-based Handsome with pleasing personality Well-settled family. Chandigarh Working girls preferred in abroad Biodata & photo invited on Email:

32 yrs, 6'0", Fair, SC, ... working in FinTech, Ed-Tech entrepreneur, ... parents, very affluent Telugu family at Hyderabad. Seeking well-educated bride (any caste) from good affluent family.

SM4 Dubai based Kashmiree Hindu boy, 42 years / 5' 11", not married, B.Tech, MBA, MS in Big 4 firm. Seeks qualified girl from any decent family.

1994 /6'0" BE wrkg Lead Standard Chart GBS Bengaluru CTC 36 LPA. Father Ex IFS. Brother wrkg Amazon London.

GOBI Tall N Married M4 N Veg N Married Home ...

SM for Jatav,B.Tech,M.Des,36/5'9",working Car Designer Pune Seeks wrkg girl,Father Retd Sr. Govt. Officer and Mother Retd. Gazetted Offr Delhi based well settled Family.

SEEKS match for Male Rajput Sonar divorcee issueless 1988 IT professional 5'3" attractive package present job location Copenhagen Denmark caste no bar.

PHD, BTech IIT, Univ. Professor, US Green Card, Never Married, 45 yrs, 5' 7", Teetotaler, Vegetarian, Seeks bride below 37, No Caste bar.

SC H'some boy,38/5,10",B.Tech, MBA, 28 LPA, MNC, London Returned, Veg, Prof Wkg Ctrl. Govt/Pvt or B.Tech,MCA,MBA other Higher qual.

AGE 33 5'8", MBA, 40LPA Handsome Tamil Iyengar Boy Seeks Beautiful Preferably Employed Girl From any Forward Caste

DY. Director (GST) march 86 /166cm divorcee, parents retired govt, seeks beautiful educated girl divorce /widow/unmarried

BRIDE for Kayasth boys 30/5'8" B.E. Manager 34 LPA MNC Bangalore & 34/5'7" Software Engr 21 LPA MNC Pune

SM4 UK based 36/5'7", handsome fair bengali boy I.T. Engineer ... Seek preferred Bride.

B.Engg/Masters in Engineering Brahmin boy Dec 1985/ 5'10' Wkg Asst Manager reputed firm Mumbai 10LPA. Parents Government employees seeks Prof.Qual.working girl. Whatsapp

COSMOPOLITAN

Seeking Hindu, cosmopolitan, working, unmarried 33-35 yrs bride for 43yrs groom, 180cm, very fair CA-MBA Marwari divorcee (no kids). Leads large finance co, lives independently in Mumbai. Send bio/photo vex226677@gmail.com

SECOND MARRIAGE

46LPA MNC Ph.D. IIT Jan 89/6'1 Mumbai. No Issue. Seeks Prof Qual Working Issueless Bride. Brahmin Prof. Call/WA

RELIGION NO BAR

30/5'9", Unmarried, Agarwal (Caste No Bar), B.Tech IIT, MBA ISB, Wrkg MNC ...

BY LANGUAGE

BENGALI

WELL-RAISED Bengali boy 41/5'6", 41 LPA MNC Bangalore seeks an Unmarried, beautiful, educated, values peace and willing to live abroad Bengali girl, not exceeding 37/5'3"

CONVENT Educated SM4 Baishya Saha Doctor Groom ... Settled in Germany

MALAYALI

SEEKS Malayali Hindu Nair Girl Chennai Settled Working for Nair Boy 42 Mar Divorcee Avittom Maharam Jmgr Pvt. Brokers

SINDHI

AFFLUENT Veg Sindhi Shikarpuri Bangalore Business Family seeks Veg Shikarpuri Girl for B.Com/ Inter CA/ 30/5'3" Type-1 Diabetic boy.

TELUGU

BRIDE wanted for Dr (DM Cardio) Telugu Naidu Bangalore based only child 30 handsome 6' Working in a corporate hospital family financially well off seeking well educated & settled girls even non medical also ok from general category only.

BY NATIONALITY

NRI/ GREEN CARD

B'FUL Girl Med/Engr./IT Match for Ade (Arm) ... Punjabi Khatri Boy. 30 year/ 5'7"/ IT/MS/AWS/AUD 1.2 LPA. affluent family.

WANTED GROOMS

BY CASTE

AGARWAL - BISA

27, 5'5", Fair, Beautiful Garg girl working in Bangalore with US Fintech 47 LPA studied from Tier 1 Colleges Affluent family in NCR

BRAHMIN

LOOKING for Brahmin, non-Kaushika groom for my daughter dty, BE, MBA, employed in US company with decent salary.

GROOM Gen Caste within 36 wanted for a Bengali Brahmin Girl 33/ 5'7"/PG ECONOMICS Sr Manager MNC at Bangalore. 40 LPA.

BEAUTIFUL, fair, slim, 35/5'4", BE,MBA, 4 mths married life, issueless, seeks never married, D'vorc issueless U/C alliances.

MBBS, MD Anesth Tata Kay. Bride 22.7.97/ 5'2" Mum, D. dtb fef Cardio & C care MRCP P-1 & II prf MD Dr. sinhaassociates@gmail.com

Wanted Groom

Looking prof.qual.match for Br. girl / never married Nov - 83 born / BE IT wkg. Seanior Solution Architect Usa Mnc / 60 LPA / +18 yrs exp. Well travelled

E-mail ID tkn1944@gmail.com Ph: +91-9327325444

KAYASTHA

KAYASTHA girl,Sep,86,5'7",b'Tall,Sr.Manager MNC,36 LPA,MBA ISB Hydb.,MBA+Engg.NMIMS 30yrs..seeks well settled boy in India from Civil Service or Corporate,IIT/IIM/equivalent.UCNB.Contact

WANTED well settled groom <30y good fam for beautiful Bengali Kayasth girl 26y 5.1f working in a reputed firm designer firm

PHD Theoretical Phy Arizona State Univ(US), Kayastha Charming beauty girl, 1989/5'2". Wrkg NMC ...

KHATRI

AFFLUENT South Delhi Khatri family seeks alliance for MDS (Ortho) Dentist girl 3'2"/87 Well settled boy from Ed. & cultured family. Father Pediatrician & brother Cap. ...

MNC Corp. match from High Status family for 35/5'3" B'ful Phd. Hindu Khatri/ Arora Girl. ... MNC Bglr. 40 LPA.

BY COMMUNITY

JAIN

ALLIANCE INVITED

South Delhi based Jain family seeks alliance for daughter, born January 1997, 4'6", slim, graceful, highly qualified. Graduate from Lady Shri Ram College (DU), MBA from Stanford University, USA. Value-oriented with a balanced traditional and global outlook. Vegetarian Jain.

Seeking well-educated, well settled, cultured match from a reputed Jain Agarwal vegetarian family, professional/business background, metro city preferred.

Contact with detailed biodata on Whatsapp: 99908 94400

AGARWAL

1997/5'6" High EQ, compassionate, intellectual, spiritual girl. BA LLB (NLU) - Awareness Coach. Family progressive, educated, open minded. Looking for ambitious and established partner. Kindly share profile

B'FUL fair Garg girl,5'7" May 96, N'married, MA Design Dev. Arts London Prof. with University in NCR. Seek q'fd match from well stld fmly.

SM4 b'ful, fair Aggarwal Vaishya girl ... Delhi/5'5", M.Tech (CS) Wkg in MNC in Bangalore, 15Lpa.

RAJPUT

RAJPUT Kashyap 31/5'5" MA Koo Madras ... NITI Ayog. JRF/GATE AIR Father: COM UPSEIDA/Retd Army Offr Class-I/PSU/MNC Rajput Groom

SM 4 Rajput 35/5'5" MBA (Fashion Designer) Professor b'ful Indore based girl. Open for all Upper Caste. Indore based preferred.

BY PROFESSION

BUSINESS

South Delhi based high status Vaish business family into business of hospitality and Export Services looking match for their daughter 28/5'3", charming, educated, masters from abroad wish to hear from high status business or professional family from India & abroad.

Contact: 9811109134 Or Mail Us At Ks48993@gmail.com

DOCTORS

SUITABLE match for twin daughters studying in the UK 5.3/30 yrs from grooms either residing in UK or Mumbai. Caste no bar. Contact father on WhatsApp

WANTED GROOM

Looking for a Hindu Doctor Groom. We are seeking a suitable match for our daughter, a 32-year-old, well-educated and accomplished Hindu girl from Bangalore. She is 5'7" in height, an MD in Paediatrics, and currently working as a Paediatric Doctor. Brought up with strong values, she is career-oriented and family-minded. We are looking for a Hindu groom who is a qualified MD Doctor, from India or abroad. Caste & Community are open with Hindu preference. Interested families may kindly contact 9880834239

BY RELIGION

HINDU

MALAYALI- Doctor (MD-Dermatology) girl, 31 based at Bangalore, Kalhara seeks professional, qualified, well settled groom from Hindu educated family.

WANTED a groom ... business man from Rajput/upper caste for good looking ... Rajput girl.

BRAHMIN, Egyptian, 36yrs, Divorced, no kids, seek 5 years difference Upper Middle class boy, Chennai only.Any Language.

PQM4 Shakumar/Kori ... girl 15/5'3", B.Tech MBA, pkg 40 LPA, Sr Cybersecurity Prof MNC Mumbai, caste no bar.

AGE 40 issueless Divorcee ACS Working in MNC seeks issueless groom CNB Contact :

MUSLIM

SUNNI Muslim, never married, female, 41 years old, 168 cm tall, MS, PhD, MBA (all degrees from the USA), senior pharma AI executive, well settled in the US. Seeks sunni muslim male, preferably never married or widowed/divorced with no kids, 40 - 50 years old, over 172 cm tall, well educated and well settled in the US.

SUNNI Lucknow bsd Pathan Educated Family Invites well Settled Match in Abroad for Girl 30/5'2" Pursuing Ph.D. from Germany.

SIKH

REPUTED Sikh Punjabi family of Patna seeks a compatible match for their daughter, lawyer, 30yrs, 5'4", LL.M., graceful & accomplished. Seeking an educated, progressive groom from a well-settled, affluent Hindu family. CA/Advocate/Doctor/Bureaucrat preferred/ Businessman. No dowry.

GENERAL

CASTE NO BAR

31 Bengali Brahmin 5'6", fair complexion, MCA, M.S in Artificial Intelligence from University of Texas. Working as OT and cyber security Head in reputed company of Bangalore. Looking for Officer ranked Airforce/Armed Forces employed groom.

MATCH for Punjabi Prajapati Girl 1988,5'4", B.Com, LLB , working in Hyderabad in Wells Fargo Bank group company earning Rs.60000 monthly. Caste No bar. Preferred Hindu boy settled/ working in Hyderabad.

GOOD Looking, Fair, Charming, Kayastha Girl, 1986/5.3", MBA Great Lake Institute. Sr. Manager Global Co. Working Mumbai. Affluent Jaipur Family.

RAJPUT lawyer girl 97/5'3" practising in DHC coming from high status family seeks professionally qualified boy.

ALLIANCE, US citizen girl, 34 years, 5'4", Sr. Lawyer, Dept. of Justice, Belongs, Doctors family. Professionally Qualified Groom.

✔ PQM4 Sikh girl, June 95, smart, PG Diploma, B.Com, Working as Agility Lead in US MNC Hyderabad.

SM never married, ... charming, youthful-looking lawyer, Punjabi Delhi-based Army Officer's daughter, financially independent. ... alliance only.

SM4 Kayasth Girl October 89/5'6"/fair/B.Tech. from IIT plus MBA (USA), 90 LPA works in Bangalore. Caste no bar.

STD BTech, M.Tech girl (SC), Jul'98 Str. Mrktg Bir Seeks professional qualified boy Caste no bar.

LOOKING for professional, slim tall boy for a smart, good looking, 5'5", Dec 94, Punjabi girl, working in BLR ...

Unmarried 37/5'3" B.Tech MBA ... No Dowry

MS Marketing IIT Mind tree USA, ... Seeks Prof. Qualified US based ... Whatsapp

SECOND MARRIAGE

SM4 Veg Agarwal b'ful 1986, 5'7 PG in mgt tech wking as consulting one in a leading MNC in NCR. MS, living with a child.

BY LANGUAGE

BENGALI

SM4 Mumbai 1992 born 5'5" Slim fair B'ful Bengali Brahmin girl, Working in National Carrier (Airlines) at Delhi (Non Veg)

BENGALI girl, 34, 5'1", B.E. MBA, wrkg. Never married. Seeking probably brahmin groom, qualified, 36 yrs, 5'7" abv & never married.

GROOM WANTED

Delhi NCR (Gurgaon) based well-settled family seeks alliance for their good looking & bright daughter 29 yrs, 5'5" Miranda House - BA MSc-Christ University, presently practising Psychologist. Father, ex-MNC Senior Exec, Mother into Social service. Looking for Progressive, Professionally Educated, Bengali Brahmin Groom (29-31 yrs), working in India. Mail : mukerjis1981@gmail.com

SINDHI

SEEKING Sindhi or Punjabi never married boy settled in USA, Europe, UAE, or Mumbai for a Sindhi Never Married Girl Affluent Family 39/5'6" working in California.

TELUGU

GROOM wanted for Telugu Naidu only child Bangalore based well settled family 33 MS USA fair and beautiful 5.6', Working in California. Seeking for well educated & settled boys from Bangalore or USA, from general category only, girl willing to relocate to Bangalore only.

BY NATIONALITY

NRI/ GREEN CARD

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MBA (UK/USCPO 44/5'2" Fair B'Tal Divorcee. Agarwal, Financially sound, daughter (1), seeks suitable match in US only.

PQM4 Sindhi girl 45/5'4" Never Married, B.E. MBA, Senior Director in MNC, USA.

KHATRI Punjabi B'ful girl 32/156 CM MS(IT), Texas USA. Father Retd C-1 off, seeks well settled, h'some & compatible boy. Caste no bar.

PQ USA match 4 Aggarwal girl 89 born,5'5" M.Tech IIT Delhi, MBA USA, employed San Francisco ... visa. Family from Delhi.

MS Missouri S&T Charming Personality beauty B'Tal girl 1990/ 5'3". Wrkg Engr. In US MNC Pennsylvania ... Parents Delhi.

43 5'6 b'ful very fair wrg in euro ... broker encas

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ELITE BRIDES WANTED

KAMMA, 26, 175 cms, Software professional, Master's in Management. Lives in Denmark. Father is a well-reputed businessman with a good net worth. Looking for a like-minded and educated match. Contact: 8396030296

FORGA, 34, 175 cms, Divorced, Businessman, Master's in Management from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Father is a well-reputed businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a like minded and educated match. Contact: 8396030296

BRAHMIN-SMARTHA, 28, 183 cms, Software professional, Master's in Management. Lives in UK. Father is well-settled businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a like minded and educated match. Contact: 8396030296

LINGAYAT, 36, 180 cms, Businessman, Bachelor's from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru. Father is a working professional. Family is affluent. Looking for a like minded and educated match. Contact: 8396030296

ELITE GROOMS WANTED

LINGAYAT, 29, 165 cms, Business, Bachelor's from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a like minded and educated match. Contact: 8396030296

BRAHMIN-MADHWA, 31, 160 cms, Software professional, Master's in Management from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru. Father is retired. Family is financially well off. Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 8396030296

CASTE NO BAR, Divorced, 40, 163 cms, Entrepreneur, Master's in Management from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru. Family is settled in Bengaluru and is financially well off. Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 8396030296

KAMMA NAIDU, 27, 165 cms, Entrepreneur, Bachelor's from a reputed institute. Lives in Bengaluru. Father is Businessman. Family is settled in Bengaluru and is financially well off. Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 8396030296

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India aims to reset AI debate with 1st Global South summit

Event To Push Cooperation On Reskilling, Workforce Transitions

Manesh.Gohain
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Unthinkable just a few years ago, when artificial intelligence was a shiny experiment — impressive demos, niche tools, and a buzzword that rarely touched daily life — today it sits at the heart of how jobs are created, services delivered, science conducted and societies governed. As the world grapples with both its promise and its risks, India is stepping into a new role, as not just a user of AI but also as a global agenda-setter, becoming the the first developing country and the first nation from the Global South to convene a global AI summit.

Speaking exclusively to **TOI**, Abhishek Singh, CEO of India AI Mission and AI Impact Summit, believes that this is India's attempt to pull the global AI debate away from elite labs and corporate boardrooms and anchor it in people, inclusion and real-world outcomes.

"This is the first summit of its kind and scale being hosted in the Global South," said Singh, adding, "AI today is largely controlled by a few countries and a few companies. India wants to bring the perspective of the Global South and ensure that AI is more inclusive and democratised."

India's case for hosting the summit, Singh said, rests on experience rather than theory. Over the past decade, platforms such as Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and telemedicine have shown how digital systems can operate at population scale, delivering services to hundreds of millions.

"India has shown its ability to adopt technology for public services," said Singh. "We want to showcase India's strength in building AI applications at population scale and also be the voice of the Global South."

The summit comes at a time when govts worldwide are struggling to balance rapid AI innovation with growing concerns over deepfakes, misinformation, bias and misuse. While there is broad agreement that AI should drive economic growth and social good, Singh said translating principles into practice remains unsewn.

"Every country agrees on two things: AI must be used for larger social good; and harm from AI must be restricted," he said. "But countries are at very different levels of technological development. That is where regulatory capacity and shared frameworks become important." India's approach, he explained, is based on what it calls a 'techno-legal framework,' combining legal safeguards with technological tools. Legal provisions require harmful content to be taken down within defined timelines and mandate labelling of AI-generated content, especially where it poses risks to individuals, public order or national security. Alongside this, India is developing tools to detect deepfakes, mitigate bias and create ethical AI certification systems.

A major focus of the summit is human capital. As automation reshapes work and threatens traditional livelihoods, the summit aims to push global cooperation on reskilling and workforce transitions, particularly for developing economies facing resource constraints.

"AI should not grow only in tech hubs," Singh said. "We are setting up data labs across the country's centres of excellence in states and smaller cities, and running large-scale skilling and training programmes so that AI reaches tier-2 and tier-3 cities." Inclusion is another central theme, with India highlighting the role of Indian-language and voice-based AI systems in expanding access. Platforms built on natural language processing and generative AI allow people to access services in their own languages, especially those uncomfortable with English.

The summit's agenda also spans AI-enabled scientific research in healthcare, agriculture and climate, while pushing for openness, reproducibility and shared standards.

While half the companies surveyed said they were investing in internal awareness and workforce reskilling, the report said: "The cause for concern, however, is that IT firms are not hiring enough graduates with skills in large language model operations or expanding their R&D divisions, and, most importantly, are not investing adequately in training and upskilling. The shortage of qualified AI trainers, limited AI skills among new labour market entrants, and policy and regulatory uncertainty surrounding AI are challenges that must be urgently addressed."

> **AI today is largely controlled by a few nations and companies. India wants to bring the perspective of the Global South and ensure that AI is more inclusive and democratised**
>
> **ABHISHEK SINGH**
> CEO of India AI Mission and AI Impact Summit

Nvidia CEO unable to attend AI Summit

Nvidia CEO **Jensen Huang**, who was to be one of the biggest attractions at the India AI Impact Summit starting on Monday, will not be able to travel to India for the event. The company issued a statement Saturday, ascribing it to "unforeseen circumstances". Huang was expected to play a prominent role at the summit — set to be inaugurated by PM Modi.

Nvidia is the world's most valuable company, with a market capitalisation of $4.4 trillion, thanks to its processors that have become indispensable to the training of AI models. Persons familiar with the development told **TOI** that Huang is under the weather. Nvidia said a senior delegation led by executive vice-president Jay Puri will attend the event to "celebrate India's exceptional AI researchers, startups, developers, and partners building country's AI infrastructure." TNN

FM: We spend 5.6% of GDP on climate action

New Delhi: Finance minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** on Saturday said India has hiked spending on climate in the past six years to 5.6% of GDP, demonstrating the country's pursuit of meeting nationally determined goals on curbing carbon emission.

Participating in a panel discussion at Munich Security Conference, she said India has increased its commitment to climate action. "Six years ago, we were spending 3.7% of our GDP on climate action. Today that figure is close to 6.6%," she said.

She said India will continue to invest in renewable energy and has been steadily building on that commitment. Carbon capture strategies have been funded in Union Budget 2026-27 so that they can be implemented across country, she said, adding that they are being 'incentivised'.

She said India achieved two-thirds of its nationally-determined commitments in the renewable sector four years ahead of the target date. TOI

Manappuram gets RBI nod for Bain acquisition

Mumbai: RBI has cleared Bain Capital's proposed acquisition of joint control in Manappuram Finance, marking a key regulatory milestone for a deal struck in 2025.

Manappuram said it received the final approval on Feb 13 for affiliates of Bain Capital to acquire joint control and hold up to 43.6% of its paid-up equity capital or convertible instruments. The approval relates to definitive agreements executed on March 20, 2025.

Under the agreement, Bain Capital committed to invest Rs 4,386 crore to acquire an 18% stake on a fully diluted basis through a preferential allotment of equity shares and warrants at Rs 236 a share. The transaction also triggers a mandatory open offer to buy an additional 26% from public shareholders at the same price, in line with takeover regulations.

With the RBI approval, Bain Capital will be classified as a promoter and will jointly control the company along with the existing promoters. Manappuram said its board will be reconstituted to include nominee directors of Bain Capital, as provided for in the transaction agreements. TOI

Rlys promises clean toilets in general, unreserved coaches

Dipak.Dash@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Railways is seeking to address the biggest concern of long-distance passengers — train toilets. On Saturday, it rolled out reforms in on-board services with focus on regular cleaning of toilets, wash basins and garbage collection in trains on the move, including for millions of passenger travelling in general or unreserved coaches to have access to cleaned toilets.

NEW MEASURES

This is a sharp contrast to the current practice where toilets, basins and common areas in general coaches of moving trains are not cleaned at regular intervals unless there is a complaint.

A top railway official said this provision is being introduced for the first time. Railways minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "In the current mechanism, cleaning is done only in reserved coaches. We have included general coaches in the new reform."

Vaishnaw also said the earlier "clean train station" concept is now being replaced with a continuous cleaning model from the train's origin to its destination. "Toilets, garbage bins, cabin interiors, water availability and minor electrical or mechanical defects such as lights going out will be addressed continuously during the journey," he said.

He announced two reforms — for better on-board services, and rail-based logistics through Gati Shakti cargo terminals and cargo related facilities — as a part of its target to implement 92 Reforms in 32 weeks in 2026".

To begin with, around 80 long-distance trains with high passenger patronage — 4-6 trains per zone — will be covered under reforms relating to on-board services in the next six months. Vaishnaw said fully technology-enabled professional teams will be engaged with defined service level agreements, specifying cleaning frequency and more frequent cleaning during peak hours.

Vaishnaw said the linen distribution, collection, and cleaning functions, which were earlier distributed among separate agencies, will also now be integrated and awarded to a single entity.

He said reforms in the cargo terminal segment are expected to generate around Rs 30,000 crore additional revenue from new Gati Shakti cargo terminals (GCTs) in the next three years.

To drive startup eco system, Cabinet gives nod to set up ₹10,000cr fund

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Cabinet has approved the launch of Urban Challenge Fund with total central assistance of Rs 1 lakh crore over five years, to help states tackle the day-to-day challenges of rapid urbanisation and steer creative redevelopment of cities, positioning them as growth hubs. It also approved establishment of Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore to mobilise venture capital for the startup ecosystem in the country.

GROWTH HUBS

Announcing the decisions, I&B minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said UCF will focus on creative redevelopment of cities, developing them as growth hubs and strengthening water and sanitation systems to drive transformative, market-linked urban infrastructure creation. The Centre-sponsored scheme was announced in 2025-26 Budget.

Under this framework, central assistance will cover 25% of a project's cost, provided that at least 50% of the funding is mobilised from the market. Govt said this will catalyse a total investment of Rs 4 lakh crore in the urban sector over the next five years. "The move marks a paradigm shift in India's urban new development approach from grant-based financing to market-linked, reform-driven and outcome-oriented infrastructure creation," it said. UCF will leverage market financing, private sector participation and citizen-centric reforms to deliver high-quality urban infrastructure.

All cities with a population of 10 lakh or more, all state capitals and major industrial cities with a population of more than one lakh can avail the fund. All municipal areas in hilly and NE states, as well as smaller ones with a population below 1 lakh, will be eligible for support under Credit Repayment Guarantee Scheme, with Rs 5,000 crore having been approved for it.

Generative AI ups demand for skilled workers: Study

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The introduction of generative AI has resulted in moderation in hiring at the entry level, increased demand for skilled mid-level workers, and provided "considerable stability" at senior level, an ICRIER study has said.

"Researchers note this moderation aligns with broader post-pandemic trends in the IT industry and cannot be attributed to AI adoption alone. Roles commonly perceived as most exposed to AI, such as software developers and database administrators, are also among those experiencing the strongest growth in demand, indicating that generative AI is primarily functioning as a productivity-enhancing complement to technical and analytical work, rather than a substitute," said the report, which was backed by OpenAI and based on a survey of over 400 firms.

Roles such as statisticians and mathematicians, application developers and database designers and administrators were among the most exposed — and had the highest demand — while HR, legal and finance professionals were least. The most impacted roles and skills include data entry and clerical work, followed by manual testing, manual quality assurance, and entry level programming.

Among business functions in IT companies, software development and engineering, followed by IT infra and cloud services and project management were seen to be the most affected, the survey showed. The report said AI adoption is reshaping hiring priorities toward hybrid skills profiles combining domain expertise and AI and data-related technical skills, instead of narrow specialisation.

Ex-lovers found dead in locked car on Noida road

Adviteya.Sahi@timesofindia.com

Noida: A 32-year-old man and a 28-year-old woman were found dead with gunshot wounds inside a locked car in Sector 107 in Noida on Saturday afternoon. Police investigating the twin deaths as murder-suicide, based on a message in the man's phone that indicated he had killed his ex-girlfriend before turning the gun on himself.

The two were identified as Rekha, a resident of Solarpur in Noida, and Sumit Kumar, a resident of Tiliakpuri in Delhi. Rekha worked in a private company in Sector 62, while Sumit had a mineral water plant business.

The deaths were discovered around 1pm on Saturday when locals found a suspiciously parked car near Dadri Road, police said. Passersby found a man, with a gun in his hand, and a woman, bleeding and unconscious in their seats, after which they alerted the police. A team from the Sector 39 police station broke open a window and discovered both dead from head gunshot wounds.

Anti-drone systems, bomb squads and 500 CCTVs to guard venue

▶Continued from page 1

The venue will also have 20-25 anti-sabotage teams, along with bomb detection and disposal squads, to conduct continuous security sweeps.

These teams are already inspecting every nook and corner of the site, as well as surrounding areas, to detect and neutralise any potential risk. Five teams of the NDRF will be deployed to tackle any kind of disaster, and two teams have been kept in reserve.

Steps are also being taken to ensure no protests or demonstrations are held around the venue.

Twenty-five teams with wireless sets and buses will coordinate, and if there is any chance of a gathering, they will immediately reach the spot and detain the protesters.

Sources said guests would be accommodated at 30 hotels in and around the city. Each hotel will be placed under the supervision of a senior IPS/RPS rank officer, who will be responsible for overseeing all security and operational arrangements at the property.

"To support the officer, a team of approximately 100 personnel will be deployed at each hotel. This staff will manage entry and exit points, and monitor guest movements," a source said.

Head Office, IT(Governance & Excellence) Department, Star House-3, PH-II-B09 Tower, C-29, G Block, 10th Floor, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai-400051.
E-mail: HO.IT.GAE@mahabank.bank.in

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR
procurement of 01 Video IP Phones with 3- years warranty & licenses for Head Office & FGMOs vide Ref. No.: HO IT/G&E/RFP/VOIP/2025-26/893 Dated 11.02.2026.
GeM Bid No. GEM/2026/B/7263618 Dated 11.02.2026
The captioned RFP is available on Bank's corporate website www.bankofindia.bank.in under "Tender" section & GeM portal. Subsequent changes if any, will henceforth be uploaded on the Bank's website & GeM portal. The last date of submission: 04.03.2026

TSTRTC TELANGANA STATE ROAD TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION LTD.
(Formerly TSRTC Ltd.) (An Undertaking of Government of Telangana)
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Email: tsrtcpro@gmail.com, tsrtc@tsrtcmgmt.gov.in URL: www.tsrtc.telangana.gov.in
File No: TSTRTC/HYD/RFA-Developer/2026 Date: 13-02-2026
TENDER NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
[through the e-procurement portal of Government of Telangana]
TSRTC invites Request for Proposals (RFP) through e-procurement portal of the Government of Telangana from the reputed infrastructure Developers for "the Development of Unity Mall Twin Towers on Joint Development basis under PPP mode" at Existing Site Bhoiguda, Wasdin, Kachiguda, Hyderabad.
(1) RFP can be viewed and downloaded from Website: https://tender.telangana.gov.in (Tender ID: 688015)
(2) Last date & time for submission of proposals online: 16.03.2026, 17.00 Hrs
(3) For further information please contact (Chief Engineer-Projects) of TSRTC Mobile - 9989318850.
Sd/-Managing Director

Government of Karnataka
STATE INSTITUTE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT
ATI Campus, Lalitha Mahal Road, Mysore-570011
Phone No. 0821-2520118, 163, Fax No. 0821-2520164
e-mail: directorsiud@gmail.com, website: www.siudmysuru.gov.in
No:SIUD/ADMN/HOST/50/2025, Date: 12.02.2026
Short Term Tender Notification
(Through KPP Portal Only)
State Institute of Urban Development, ATI Campus, Lalitha Mahal Road, Mysuru invites Tender from interested agencies for the following goods. (1)Tender Number SIUD/2025-26/IND0003/CALL-3 , Supply & Installation of Computers, Laptops and Firewall to SIUD Mysuru, Amount put to Tender. Rs. 63,10,000/- Last Date & Time 20.02.2026 & 4.00 pm. Further details can be observed by logging into e-portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in
Sd/- Deputy Director
SIUD, Mysuru
DIR/NYSORE/SHRD ISAU/1658/2025-26

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EMPLOYMENT NOTICE
1. Stn HQ ECHS CHAFB invites applications to engage following Medical, Para Medical & Non-Medical Staff on contractual basis at ECHS Polyclinic Bangalore (Urban), ECHS Polyclinic Hassan, and Regional Centre ECHS Bangalore & ECHS Referral Cell for a period of one year upto 31 Mar 2027). The details are as under:-

Sl. No.	Appointment	ECHS Polyclinic Bangalore(Urban)/ CH Referral Cell	ECHS Polyclinic Hassan	Regional Centre Jalahalli	Fixed Remuneration
1	Medical officer	06	01	01	*95,000-pm
2	Dental Officer	–	01	–	*95,000-pm
3	Officer-in-Charge	–	01	–	*95,000-pm
4	Lab Assistant	01	–	–	*36,500-pm
5	Lab Technician	02	–	–	*36,500-pm
6	Pharmacist	03	01	–	*36,500-pm
7	Nursing Assistant	02	–	–	*36,500-pm
8	Dental AT/H	01	01	–	*36,500-pm
9	Radiographer	01	–	–	*36,500-pm
10	Physiotherapist	01	–	–	*36,500-pm
11	IT Network Tech	–	–	01	*36,500-pm
12	Female Attendant	01	01	–	*21,800-pm
13	Peon	01	–	–	*21,800-pm
14	Safaiwala	01	01	–	*21,800-pm
15	Data Entry Operator	01	–	01	*29,200-pm
16	Clerk	01	–	–	*29,200-pm
	Total	22	07	03	

*Note:- Fixation of Remuneration for Re-engaged/ Retired Contractual Staff
A fixed monthly remuneration shall be admissible during the contract period. The same shall be arrived at by deducting the basic pension from the last pay drawn at the time of retirement. The remuneration so fixed shall remain unchanged for the entire tenure of the contract. No increment, DA or HRA shall be admissible during the contract period.
A fixed Transport Allowance for commuting between the residence and place of work may be granted. The amount shall not exceed the rate applicable to the individual at the time of retirement. The Transport Allowance so fixed shall also remain unchanged during the tenure of the contractual appointment.
2. For QRs, Terms and Conditions, Application Form & Remuneration. Kindly see our website www.echs.gov.in For additional details, please contact O/o Stn HQ, ECHS Command Hospital Air Force, Cambridge Road, Bangalore or Telephone No. 080-2991 7023 or concerned CSD, ECHS Polyclinic / RC for details. Preference will be given to the Ex-servicemen as per the existing regulations. Only candidates meeting the essential Qualitative Requirements may apply.
3. Last Date of Receipt of Application. Application as per requisite format along with self-attested photocopies of testimonials in support of educational qualification, work experience, Mobile and e-Mail Id is to be submitted either by hand to O/o Stn HQ ECHS Command Hospital Air Force Cambridge Road Bangalore between 0930h to 1600h (Mon-Sat) or send by Regd / Speed Post to SO, Stn HQ ECHS, C/O Command Hospital Air Force, Agram Post Cambridge Road, Bangalore – 560 007 latest by cease work of 28 Feb 2026.
4. Interview Date, Timing and Venue. The shortlisted candidates duly informed via call and E-Mail is to reach the O/o Stn HQ ECHS Command Hospital Air Force Bangalore by 1000h for interview on 09 & 10 Mar 2026. The candidates MUST bring in ORIGINAL all relevant certificates / mark-sheets / degrees of 10th / Matric, 10+2 & Graduation / Post Graduation / Diploma / Course, work experience and Discharge Book, PPO, Service records etc. for verification. No TA / DA is admissible.

रजि. सं. डी.एल. -33004/99 RNI. No. D.L.33004/99

भारत का राजपत्र
The Gazette of India

सी.जी.-डी.एल.-अ.-11022026-270859
CG-DL-E-11022026-270859

असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग II—खण्ड 3—उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II—Section 3—Sub-section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

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No. 682] NEW DELHI, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026/MAGHA 17, 1947

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 6th February, 2026

S.O. 633(E).- In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after having satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building (widening/four/six laning with paved shoulder etc.,), maintenance, management and operation of AP/KN Border - KN/TS Border in the stretch of land from Km. 0+000 to Km. 54+566 Economic Corridor-20 (NH167) in the village(s) namely- Bolmanddodi, Dasogur, Ganjhalli, Gillesugur, Gonwar, Gunjhalli, Harshimhal, Tavinadoddi, Karnasugur, Karlakur, Kudur, Mallabad, Mittimallapur, Polkamddodi, Raichur, Shalawadi, Sidnampur, Tungabhadra, Tuntapur, Wadwati, Yergera Taluk- Raichur in the district of RAICHUR in the state of KARNATAKA hereby declares its intention to acquire such land, as specified in the Schedule;

Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section(1) of section 3C of the said Act;

Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, Special Land Acquisition Officer, NHAI Raichur in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.

Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final.

The land plans and other details of the land to be acquired under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.

SCHEDULE

Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling within AP/KN Border - KN/TS Border in the stretch of land from Km. 0+000 to Km. 54+566 Economic Corridor-20 (NH167) in the village(s) namely- Bolmanddodi, Dasogur, Ganjhalli, Gillesugur, Gonwar, Gunjhalli, Harshimhal, Tavinadoddi, Karnasugur, Karlakur, Kudur, Mallabad, Mittimallapur, Polkamddodi, Raichur, Shalawadi, Sidnampur, Tungabhadra, Tuntapur, Wadwati, Yergera Taluk-Raichur in the district of RAICHUR in the state of KARNATAKA.

908 GI/2026

File Number: NHAI/LA/RD-BNG/KNT/HOSPET/3A
Shaikh Amin Khan, Director.

District: RAICHUR
https://egazette.gov.in
Publication Date:6 February 2026
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https://bhoomirashi.gov.in

Scan for Notification in English and Hindi

Scan for Notification in Kannada

Note: The physical copy of this notification is also available at the office of CALA/PIU/PMU/RO/ED and Landowners may also see the notification there.

AI will help define India's future, and India will help define AI's future

TOI EXCLUSIVE

SAM ALTMAN

I'll be in India this week for the Global AI Impact Summit, where conversations will focus on expanding access to AI and putting it to work for more people, in more parts of the country, as quickly as possible.

The momentum is clear. As of this month, India has 100 million weekly active users, giving it the second largest user base of any country in the world besides the US. It has the largest number of students on ChatGPT worldwide, a sign of how many young people here are treating AI as a way to learn faster and get ahead. And it ranks fourth globally in the use of Prism, our free new tool for scientific research and collaboration.

But bringing AI's benefits to more people means broadening access, adoption, and agency. Access is the admission ticket; without it, people and institutions cannot participate fully in the AI era. Adoption is putting AI to work in classrooms, workplaces, and public services. Agency is what turns access and adoption into impact by giving people the ability and confidence to use AI to learn faster, build more, and make better decisions. When the three align, more people can participate not just as users of AI, but as builders and beneficiaries of the growth it enables.

India, the world's largest democracy, has all the ingredients to be a full-stack AI leader: optimism about what AI can do for the country, homegrown tech talent, and a national strategy for how to incorporate the technology more widely. India gets that we need to use AI to just build things to drive human progress. To that end, the govt's IndiaAI Mission is designed to expand the country's compute capacity, support startups, and accelerate multilingual applications that improve public service delivery, including in healthcare and agriculture. It is an effort to make sure AI is not confined to a small slice of early adopters but becomes an essential tool for hundreds of millions of people across India.

It's critical to get that balance right. If AI access and adoption are uneven, AI's upside will be uneven, too. Many people may have access to the tools, but far fewer will know how to use them well enough to translate that access into real gains. We call that the capability overhang and left unaddressed, it risks concentrating productivity and economic gains in a few hands rather than ensuring that people everywhere benefit from the technology. Given India's size, it also risks forfeiting a vital opportunity to advance democratic AI in emerging markets around the world.

It's critical to get the balance right. If AI access and adoption are uneven, AI's upside will be uneven, too. Many people may have access to the tools, but far fewer will know how to use them well enough to translate that access into real gains

OpenAI is committed to doing its part to help build AI in India, with India, and for India. We've made our tools available for free so they're accessible to Indians regardless of their income, education, or familiarity with technology.

We're also focused on practical, near-term steps that can be taken now to help Indians unlock AI's transformative power. Three things make the difference: equipping more people with AI literacy, building the computing and energy infrastructure that powers advanced AI systems, and integrating AI more fully into real workflows.

First, AI literacy at scale. Not abstract familiarity, but practical fluency in coding, knowledge work, and other real-world uses of AI to write, analyse, plan, learn, and solve problems in ways that match the work in front of you. That means helping students and workers develop both AI skills and confidence in their ability to use them. This is how access turns into adoption, and how adoption turns into agency.

EYE ON UPSIDE: Countries that build the infrastructure will be in a stronger position to shape the future of this technology

Second, the infrastructure that makes adoption possible at national scale. AI runs on computing capacity and the energy to power it. Infrastructure is destiny, and countries that build those foundations will be in a stronger position to shape the future of this technology and realise more of its upside.

Third, integration into real workflows. People adopt AI fastest when it helps with the work in front of them, not when it adds a new system to learn. Put AI to work in classrooms, clinics, small businesses, and public services, and it can increase productivity, expand the frontiers of what is possible, and deliver tangible value quickly.

This agenda is urgent for another reason: AI itself is moving from systems that primarily answer questions to systems that can accelerate cutting-edge scientific research and take action in the physical world, including robotics.

None of this works without trust. Individuals need confidence in the tools they are using, and institutions need clear ways to deploy them responsibly. Different users also need different protections, especially younger users, who deserve stronger safeguards as they learn how to use these tools. If we want AI to expand opportunity, safety and reliability have to keep pace with capability.

India brings something important to this moment: optimism about what AI can do, matched with a serious national effort to make it real. With its focus on access, practical AI literacy, and the infrastructure that supports widespread adoption, India is well positioned to broaden who benefits from the technology and to help shape how democratic AI is adopted at scale.

That's exactly why I am here, and why we're leaning in for the long term. We recently brought more than 200 nonprofit leaders together across four cities in India to learn how to use ChatGPT to extend their teams' capacity and deepen their impact. We opened our first office in Delhi last August and plan to expand our footprint this year. We will soon be announcing new ways of partnering with the Indian govt to put access to AI and its benefits within reach for more people across the country.

What happens next even more. AI will help define India's future, and India will help define AI's future. And it will do so in a way only a democracy can. ■

Altman is CEO of OpenAI

For Bangladesh, this is a moment of both peril and possibility

BY INVITATION

HARSH V PANT

The 2026 general election in Bangladesh—the first electoral exercise after the 2024 student-led uprising that brought an abrupt end to Sheikh Hasina's long and increasingly authoritarian tenure—marks a decisive inflection point in the country's political evolution. What has emerged is not simply an alternation of power, but a reconfiguration of political legitimacy.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, has won a commanding two-thirds majority in the 299-member Jatiya Sangsad, winning 209 seats. Rahman, son of former president Ziaur Rahman and former PM Khaleda Zia, now stands poised to be PM. For a party that spent nearly two decades in exile, marginalisation, and suppression under Awami League dominance, this is an extraordinary resurrection.

Equally significant is the structural vacuum left by the disbanding and electoral exclusion of the Awami League. The electorate's verdict is less an endorsement of the BNP in ideological terms and more an emphatic rejection of centralised, personality-driven rule. The 2024 'Gen Z uprising', animated by economic anxieties—rising inflation, unemployment, and stagnating mobility—has reshaped the political grammar of the republic. The simultaneous approval of the July Charter referendum, introducing term limits for the PM, strengthened judicial independence, gender quotas and safeguards against authoritarian relapse, underscores the popular appetite for institutional renewal.

Yet the verdict is layered. Jamaat-e-Islami's strong performance—securing 68 seats—signals the persistence, if not resurgence, of Islamist mobilisation in a society constitutionally committed to secular principles. The National Citizen Party (NCP), the political offspring of the uprising, managed only six seats, a reminder that street legitimacy does not automatically translate into electoral visibility. Voter turnout hovering around 59-60% reflected cautious engagement in a transitional moment.

BNP campaigned under the slogan 'Bangladesh before all', which blends nationalism, democratic restoration, and economic revival. Its ambitious manifesto promises implementation of the July Charter's reforms. But there is an inherent tension here. A two-thirds parliamentary majority enables swift reform but may also reduce incentives to institutionalise constraints—particularly those, such as proportional representation, that could dilute concentrated power.

On governance, the BNP has pledged a zero-tolerance anti-corruption regime, featuring transparent procurement, performance audits, repatriation of illicit financial flows, and the appointment of an ombudsman. Given Tarique Rahman's own history of corruption allegations and prolonged exile in London, credibility will hinge on demonstrable top-down enforcement rather than rhetorical commitments.

Economically, the new govt inherits fragility. The unrest of 2024-2025 disrupted production cycles and investor confidence. Reviving the garments sector, diversifying exports, and generating nearly one million ICT jobs are central to the BNP's recovery blueprint. It also has a broader developmental narrative aimed squarely at a restless

TIGHTROPE WALK: Tarique Rahman must navigate a tightening geopolitical contest in the Bay of Bengal

youth constituency. Foreign policy under Rahman is likely to be recalibrated rather than revolutionised. The BNP's articulation of an "economy-based" diplomacy suggests a more transactional posture, anchored in national interest rather than ideological affinity. Delhi-Dhaka ties had already deteriorated after Hasina's 2024 ouster and subsequent exile in India. The BNP's formal call for her extradition introduces an immediate diplomatic sensitivity.

Border management along the 4,096-km frontier, allegations of 'push-ins', and water-sharing disputes over rivers such as the Teesta and Padma are likely to test the resilience of the relationship. India's concerns over the protection of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh will remain salient. At the same time, PM Modi's swift outreach and Rahman's reciprocal signals of engagement suggest that neither side is inclined toward open confrontation. The relationship may become more transactional and less emotive—but not necessarily adversarial.

PM Modi's swift outreach and Rahman's reciprocal signals of engagement suggest that neither side is inclined toward open confrontation. The relationship may become more transactional but not necessarily adversarial

China has also moved quickly to reaffirm its commitment to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership." In the post-Hasina interregnum, Beijing accelerated infrastructure financing under the Belt and Road Initiative, expanded energy investments, and deepened defence cooperation. Reports of a drone production facility near the Siliguri Corridor and potential JF-17 fighter arrangements via Pakistan underscore the strategic sensitivity for Delhi. Under a BNP govt, Sino-Bangladeshi ties are likely to intensify, particularly in trade, infrastructure, and technology sectors. However, BNP appears intent on multi-alignment rather than overt tilting, maintaining functional ties with China, India, the US, and even Pakistan, while avoiding strategic overdependence.

The central challenge for Tarique Rahman is thus twofold. Domestically, he must convert a sweeping mandate into credible institutional reform without replicating the concentration of power that unseated his predecessor. Externally, he must navigate a tightening geopolitical contest in the Bay of Bengal without compromising Bangladesh's strategic autonomy. Bangladesh stands at a moment of possibility—and peril. The electorate has repudiated authoritarianism, but the durability of democratic restoration will depend not on electoral arithmetic alone, but on institutional restraint, economic delivery, and diplomatic balance. ■

Pant is vice president, Observer Research Foundation

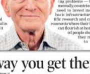
'Talented Indians shouldn't have to go to Europe or US to do top-tier research

__Randy Schekman,__ who shared the 2013 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering how cells organise the transport of molecules in tiny packages called vesicles, was the chief guest at Infosys Prize 2025 ceremony in Bengaluru. In an interview with __Habeeba Salim__, he explains why he has made Parkinson's his latest mission and how his discovery helps diabetics

■ Your work on vesicle transport won you a Nobel. Can you explain its impact on our lives?

Diabetics in India and around the world rely on insulin. What most people don't know is that much of it is made by the same yeast used to bake bread and brew beer. That's a very direct way basic cell biology touches everyday life.

Our lives are made possible by about 100,000 different protein molecules — long strings of amino acids that fold into enzymes and structural proteins which build and maintain our bodies. They are made inside our cells, many of which must be exported — like insulin or the molecules that let nerve cells talk to each other. These are carried in tiny vesicles, a system that evolved billions of years ago. I was fortunate to choose yeast as the model to study this protein export. Within the first two years, I was able to isolate the genes that organise this pathway, map how they interact, and identify the proteins they encode. Later, when the human genome was sequenced, we discovered that humans have the same genes (as yeast) — not surprising, since this process evolved 2 billion years ago and evolution reuses what works. This made it possible for the emerging biotech industry in San Francisco to use yeast as a platform to manufacture important human proteins that are normally exported from cells, like insulin. Within a few years, scientists could introduce the human insulin gene into yeast and equip it with the signals needed for yeast to recognise and secrete it.



Today, about one-third of the world's supply of recombinant human insulin is produced in giant fermentation vats of yeast.

■ You've been a strong advocate of open science. What has made you so upset with elite science journals?

The so-called elite, high-profile journals fought bitterly against open access for years because they saw it as a threat to their profit margins. The two biggest commercial players have some of the highest profit margins of any company in the world — not in absolute dollars, but in margins. They rely on what is essentially free labour: scientists review the papers for them, and institutions pay very high license fees to access the journals. On top of that, they charge huge fees for open-access publication because young scholars feel their careers depend on publishing in these journals. Publishing a full-length open-access paper can now cost an investigator about $12,000.

FOR THE RECORD

Final decisions are made by 'professional editors' — people who may once have been scientists but no longer practice. In my view, many of these editors lack the judgment to make such critical decisions, especially when complex new technologies are involved. And although they deny it, they are often influenced by the desire to publish "shiny objects" — sensational papers that generate buzz and media coverage. That pressure can drive them to publish work that appears exciting but later turns out to be wrong. The most infamous case is (UK doctor) Andrew Wakefield's paper suggesting a link between childhood vaccination and autism. Even after the paper was retracted and Wakefield was found to have manipulated data and lost his medical license, he still has a second career promoting anti-vaccine views alongside people like RFK Jr.

■ Geopolitics is suddenly a factor in scientific research and funding. What should countries like India plan for?

India has enormous human potential. The tragedy is that much of that potential is realised only when people move abroad. I'm cautious about telling politicians what to do — they have many competing problems — but fundamentally, countries like India need to invest more in the basic infrastructure of scientific research and create environments where their best minds can flourish at home. Talented people shouldn't feel they must move to Western Europe or the US to do top-tier work.

■ Tell us an anecdote that captures your journey into science?

I'll share a story that may end up on my tombstone. As a child growing up in Southern California, I got a toy microscope for my 11th birthday. I went to a local dry riverbed, scooped up a jar of pond scum, took it to my bedroom, put a drop on a slide, and looked through the plastic lens. I was astonished by the profusion of tiny organisms swimming around. One evening at dinner I tried to describe this to my father, who was quite sceptical. He thought I just had a vivid imagination. I was offended by his scepticism and decided I needed a real microscope. I did odd jobs — babysitting, mowing lawns, delivering newspapers — and resolved to save $100, which was a lot of money in 1962, to buy a proper student microscope. I hid the money in my bedroom closet. But I could never reach $100 because my mother kept borrowing some of it to buy groceries. One Saturday, I was so upset that I got on my bicycle and rode to the local police station. I told the duty officer I wanted to run away from home because my mother was stealing my money and I couldn't buy my microscope. They called my father in. He met with the captain, and I'm sure he was angry, but the upshot was that he and I went to a local pawn shop. In the front window was a Bausch & Lomb monocular microscope — my dream. We bought it for $100. That instrument became my pride and joy. All through high school I entered science fairs with projects on microorganisms using that microscope. Then I went off to university, and the microscope went into storage. Fortunately, my parents kept it and later mailed it to me when I was living near Berkeley with my own family. You can now see it on display in Stockholm (at the Nobel museum), with a caption in English and Swedish explaining how I tried to run away from home to pursue my career in science.

■ What else are you working on?

There's another area that is very exciting to me, and it's personal. My wife died of Parkinson's disease. I was asked to lead a new effort to bring investigators together to study the basic science of Parkinson's. This initiative is supported by the Sergey Brin Family Foundation. Sergey Brin, the co-founder of Google, and his mother share a mutation in one of about 20 known genes linked to familial forms of the disease. He isn't ill yet, but he's at risk, and he has invested over a billion dollars in Parkinson's research.

AI is not just killing jobs; it is breaking the way you get them

BY INVITATION

JASPREET BINDRA

HyperWrite CEO Matt Shumer's post 'Something Big is Happening' has generated a viral earthquake. The post was widely shared because it was not just speculation, but a report from the trenches. He has described how he gave a complex coding task to an AI agent, GPT-5.3 Codex. When he returned after four hours, the work was not just finished but was executed with "taste" and "judgment," qualities we previously reserved for humans.

Comparing the present to the February 2020 pre-Covid moment, that brief, eerie calm before a global upheaval, Schumer shot off a blunt warning: AI has crossed a qualitative line: from "helpful tool" to "independent doer." Whether it is coding, legal drafting, or financial analysis, execution that once took days now takes minutes.

This suggests a terrifying reality for the traditional white-collar worker: if your value lies in the 'doing' rather than the thinking/orchestrating/decision-making, you are increasingly redundant. Schumer is not alone. Anthropic.ai founder Dario Amodei predicts that AI could eliminate half of all entry-level, white-collar jobs within five years. Aneesh Raman, a senior leader in LinkedIn, sees "the bottom rung of the job ladder breaking".

For every prophet of the AI apocalypse, there is a sceptic. AI luminary Gary Marcus argues that we are witnessing a massive "AI bubble" fuelled by statistical trickery. He says the post glosses over the boring but decisive issues: reliability, error rates, security and trust problems, especially when systems look convincing enough that humans stop checking.

Marcus is right to be sceptical of the 'God-like AI' narrative. However, there is no denying that AI will cause a work and job disruption, the same way that the steam engine, the computer, or the internet did, if not more. Even if Shumer's timelines are too aggressive, the direction of travel is hard to deny. I believe that the disruption is not simply that "jobs will disappear;" it is that the model by which millions used to get jobs is breaking. For instance, in urban India, for decades, we followed a rigid, almost sacred, liturgical path —a conveyor belt model from school to (usually) engineering degree to an MBA/postgrad to a management trainee, and then a long corporate climb. Another route was to skip the MBA, go to a big IT firm after engineering and then do years of project rotations and certifications, thus ensuring a lifetime orbit around IT.

This model is now dying. Debugging code, summarising reports, data entry — the bottom rung — is exactly what AI does best. If that rung disappears, the ladder becomes inaccessible. Because if AI can do the work of ten juniors, companies will no longer pay to train those juniors.

It might be cold comfort, but this is not the first time our model of work has shattered. Before the Industrial Revolution, the dominant model was around apprenticeship, where you lived with a master blacksmith or a weaver for years, sometimes paid him to teach you, and learnt the craft through proximity and manual labour. Then came the 'factory model,' where you went in as a child, and rose up the blue-collar ranks. We then shifted to the 'specialisation' model of the 20th century, where you learned a single skill and sold it to a single firm for 40 years. That, too, died with the advent of the PC and the internet. Now, as we enter the Age of AI, work will remain, but the model of work will break and change again.

For decades, Indians followed a rigid conveyor belt model from school to (usually) engg degree to an MBA/postgrad to a management trainee, and then a long corporate climb. Another route was to skip the MBA, and go to a big IT firm after engineering. This model is now dying

DARK DAYS FOR WHITE-COLLAR SECTOR: If AI can do the work of ten juniors, companies will no longer spend money to train those juniors

If the model is breaking, what should we, especially the young, do?

Rediscover Humanities. As answers become a commodity, the value shifts to the questions. Logic, ethics, philosophy, and literature provide the frameworks to understand human motivation and critical judgment—things AI can only mimic.

Aim for the 'second rung.' Do not wait for a company to teach you the basics. Use AI as your apprentice to teach yourself to do the work of a mid-level professional while you are still in college. Your goal should be to enter the workforce with a 'portfolio career' — a mix of technical skills and creative outlets. Be a coder who understands the 'why' of a business, or a designer who understands the 'how' of AI agents.

Become an entrepreneur: As every process in every company and industry gets disrupted, each of them is an entrepreneurial opportunity to set up a company 'solving' for it. The 'safe' corporate job is a myth now; the new safety lies in the ability to build things yourself.

Embrace AI literacy: The definition of literacy has changed from reading, writing to that and how to work with AI in everything you do. AI talent is just not AI and ML engineers, but HR, marketing, and salespeople who use AI to do their jobs better and faster.

Matt Shumer concluded his post by saying that this will be the most important year of your career. He is right, but not because the robots are taking over. It is because the ladder we were promised is gone; it is time to learn a new way to be a professional. ■

Bindra is the founder of AI&Beyond and author of 'Winning With AI: Your Guide to AI Literacy'

WORD DROP

DIP BUYING

After setting new record highs for months, the prices of silver and gold finally crashed recently, their lustre replaced by a deep red. However, as many exited, others bought in, stepping in at a time others were stepping out. This act of swimming against the tide or "buy low, sell high" is what is known in formal trading lingo as

dip buying, referring to the strategy of purchasing an asset after it has fallen in price, with the expectation that the decline is temporary and the long-term trend remains intact. Hence, you buy at lower prices, and then later sell them as prices climb up again, making a profit. However, it is essentially a risky bet: if the downward spiral continues, the losses can balloon.

Email your letters to the editor at
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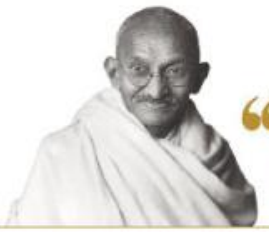
with 'Sunday Mailbox' in the subject line.
Please mention your name and city

Thousand Days

From Hope to Happiness



> The future depends on what you do today.
>
> Mahatma Gandhiji

Under the noble ideals of **'Antyodaya'** and **'Sarvodaya'** championed by **Mahatma Gandhiji**, the Government of Karnataka, led by Hon'ble Chief Minister **Shri Siddaramaiah** and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister **Shri D K Shivakumar**, marks a significant milestone of 1,000 days in office.

Key Milestones

₹1.16+ Lakh Crore Allocated so far for the Five Guarantees	**2.11+ Lakh** Families Provided with Title Deeds	**₹1.5 Lakh Crore** Invested in Bengaluru's Infrastructure Development
₹1.12+ Lakh Crore Reserved Annually for Public Welfare Schemes	**1.37+ Crore** Families are Direct Beneficiaries of Government Schemes	

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karnataka information

That morning cuppa is helping your brain too

Amja.Jaiswal @timesofindia.com

Your morning espresso may be doing more than waking you up. It could be helping your brain age better. A large US study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association on Feb 9 has found that people who regularly drink moderate amounts of caffeinated coffee or tea are less likely to develop dementia.

The analysis drew on two long-running health cohorts, the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, tracking 1,31,821 adults for up to 43 years. During follow-up, more than 11,000 participants developed dementia. After adjusting for lifestyle and health factors, those with higher intake of caffeinated coffee had an 18% lower risk compared with low or non-drinkers, with the strongest benefit seen at 2-3 cups a day. Tea showed a similar association at 1-2 cups daily, while decaffeinated coffee showed no benefit.

Higher caffeinated coffee intake was also linked to fewer complaints of memory decline and slightly better performance on objective cognitive tests, particularly among women. The benefit followed a clear moderation window, with heavier consumption offering no added advantage.

Commenting on the findings, Manjari Tripathi, head of neurology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, said moderate caffeinated coffee intake, especially before 2pm, has been associated with a lower risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia and Parkinson's. She cautioned, however, that these conditions are complex and shaped by multiple factors, including genetics, lifestyle, diet, education and long-term control of obesity, diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol.

She also warned that excessive caffeine can disturb sleep and trigger heart rhythm problems, particularly in older adults. Coffee consumed late in the day or in large quantities can lead to insomnia, which itself affects memory. Moderation, she said, remains key.

Placing the findings in an Indian and Asian context, Dr Praveen Gupta, neurologist at Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon, said there are no large Indian dementia cohort studies examining coffee or tea intake on the scale of US research. He pointed out that tea is the dominant beverage in India, not coffee, and evidence from smaller studies in China and Japan suggests green tea may be linked to lower cognitive decline, while results for coffee remain mixed.

Dr Gupta added that tolerance varies widely. For many older adults, 1-3 cups of caffeinated coffee or tea a day may be well tolerated, but caffeine can worsen symptoms in people with insomnia, anxiety, acid reflux, heart rhythm disorders or high blood pressure. Any recommendation, he said, must be tailored to individual health profiles rather than applied uniformly.

Study tracks 5,400 children after cancer treatment

Analysis Of 2016-2024 Data Encouraging

Amja.Jaiswal @timesofindia.com

HOPE FLOATS

New Delhi: For thousands of families across India, the words "cancer-free" mark relief and new beginnings. But what happens after treatment ends has, until now, remained largely undocumented in the country.

On the eve of International Childhood Cancer Day, researchers released findings from India's first large, national childhood cancer survivorship programme, tracking more than 5,400 children who completed treatment across 20 centres, including in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Bengaluru.

Launched in 2016 by Indian Paediatric Haematology Oncology Group, the Indian Childhood Cancer Survivorship study is published in 'The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia'. Lead author Dr Rachna Seth, chief of the oncology division in the department of paediatrics at AIIMS, New Delhi, said the idea was conceptualised in 2014 and became operational by 2016. The analysis includes data from 2016 to 2024.

"For years, the focus was only on acute care — that children should survive," she said. "But now we know many do survive, and they have decades of life ahead of them. What matters next is how they live after treatment." The early findings are encouraging. The five-year overall survival rate stands at 94.5%, while event-free survival is at 89.9%.

Two years after treatment, the survival rate rises to 98.2%. As of Dec 2024, follow-up data was available for 5,140 children, with nearly 92% alive and in remission.

Leukaemia accounted for 41% of cases, making it the most common diagnosis in the cohort. Hodgkin lymphoma, bone tumours and retinoblastoma were also among the leading cancers treated. Nearly all children received chemotherapy, about one in four underwent radiotherapy, nearly one-third required surgery and more than half needed blood transfusions.

However, survival is only part of the picture. Seth said survivors may face long-term medical and psychosocial challenges, including fertility concerns, cardiac dysfunction, cognitive issues, relapse and second cancers. "These late effects need to be systematically captured. Until now, we were largely extrapolating from Western data. India had none," she said.

While the published analysis covers 20 centres, nearly 35 to 36 centres are now contributing data. "This gives us our own baseline," Seth said.

Bengal BLO arrested for murder, alleged affair angle probed

Kolkata: A block-level election officer arrested for abducting a man in Bengal's North 24 Parganas district has confessed to killing him, police said Saturday, after dismembered body parts were retrieved from three water bodies near the India-Bangladesh border, **reports Sanjib Chakraborty**.

Nasir Ali, a resident of Baduria near the Bangladesh frontier about 75km north of Kolkata, was allegedly murdered by Rizwan Hasan Mondal, a primary school teacher who also served as a BLO during EC's special revision of rolls (SIR). Investigators suspect an alleged extramarital relationship between Mondal and Ali's wife as the motive.

Rohit Pawar seeks probe into plane crash

Anurag.Bende @timesofindia.com

Pune: NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar has written to Union home minister Amit Shah seeking a "comprehensive and independent" probe into the Jan 28 plane crash that claimed the life of his uncle and former deputy CM Ajit Pawar. Sharing the Feb 12 letter on his X handle, Rohit said he had also sought appointments with Shah, civil aviation minister K Ram Mohan Naidu and senior DGCA officials.

"The home minister and civil aviation minister might be busy due to the ongoing Parliament session, due to which I might not get the appointment. I, however, fail to understand why DGCA officials did not give an appointment," Rohit said in the post.

Earlier, Rohit had conducted a detailed presentation in Mumbai outlining several concerns regarding the crash and raising questions for investigating agencies and govt. Continuing his demand for clarity, he listed 12 specific points in his letter to Shah.

Calling for a transparent investigation into the Learjet-45 crash, Rohit demanded that the probe be completed within one month. His letter stated, "Along with the time-bound probe, investigate the discrepancies in official records, including ATC transcripts, central reports, flight radar data and cockpit voice recording. Examine landing-related decisions, including runway selection, visibility, premature descent, and non-diversion."

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(Telephone & Fax No. 0141-2227325
email id: Managing Director, rajasthansamwad2002@gmail.com)

NOTICE INVITING BIDS
NIB No 14 Date: 13.02.2026

Invitation Of Bids For The Work Of IEC Material Printing invited from interested bidders up to 4:00 PM 06.03.2026 Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in & http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state and https://dipr.rajasthan.gov.in/. The approximate value of the procurement is Rs. 50 Crore.
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Managing Director, Rajasthan Samwad, Jaipur

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GLOBAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Corrigendum to the earlier notification dated 03.02.2026 for extension of the submission date.
Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), A Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) under the Ministry of Railways, invites EOI through online from potential buyers / contractors for purchase of Trench Cutter Machines (Bauer BC-35) available @ Chennai.
Further details are available on https://rvnl.ewizard.in
Last date for submission of application Date: 19.02.2026 (Online Mode only) 15.00 hrs.

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Request for proposal for Selection of Selection of Agency for Bulk Purchase and Lifting of Class 'A' Manure from STP Diggian, Sector 66 Mohali SAS Nagar under Municipal Corporation Chandigarh.
Municipal Corporation Chandigarh intends to select an agency to/for Bulk Purchase and Lifting of Class 'A' Manure from STP Diggian, Sector 66 Mohali SAS Nagar under Municipal Corporation Chandigarh. RFP document can be downloaded from etenderschd@nic.in. The interested experienced and eligible entities may participate on or before 18.02.2026 (Re-invite).
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BESCOM invites tender vide Enquiry No. BESCOM/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT 997 Expansion of Distribution Automation System to Peri-urban areas of Bengaluru City, District headquarters & Industrial areas across BESCOM jurisdiction.
Availability of bid document: On or after 20.02.2026
The detailed notification can be obtained from the Website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.
For Electricity related complaints call: 1912
Download BESCOM Mithra Mobile APP
Sd/-
General Manager, (DAS), BICC-1, Bengaluru-560 102.

पं.सुं.श. केन्द्रीय व्यावसायिक शिक्षा संस्थान
(राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान एवं प्रशिक्षण परिषद की इकाई, शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अन्तर्गत)
श्यामला हिल्स, भोपाल - 462002, वेबसाइट : www.psscive.ac.in
TENDER NOTICE / निविदा सूचना
सूचित किया जाता है कि पं.सुं.श. केन्द्रीय व्यावसायिक शिक्षा संस्थान, भोपाल द्वारा निविदा आमंत्रित की गई है :-

1.	Agriculture Lab-Hydroponic Setup - [illegible]	Last Date : 26.02.2026
2.	Agriculture Lab-Honey bee boxes with bee colonies - [illegible]	Last Date : 26.02.2026
3.	EV Lab -Battery BMS Algorithm and CAN Protocol with Data Acquisition System - [illegible]	Last Date : 05.03.2026
4.	Retail Lab [illegible]	Last Date : 27.02.2026
5.	Healthcare Lab - [illegible]	Last Date : 09.03.2026
6.	Laptop [illegible]	Last Date : 25.02.2026
7.	Almirah & Executive Table [illegible]	Last Date : 23.02.2026
8.	Conference Hall (SS & 2B) Equipments for Advanced IT Infrastructure) [illegible]	Last Date : 06.03.2026
9.	Auditorium Equipments for Advanced IT Infrastructure & Furniture [illegible]	Last Date : 06.03.2026

अतः इच्छुक निविदाकर्ता इस प्रयोजन के सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत विवरण संस्थान की वेबसाइट : www.psscive.ac.in पर देखा जा सकता है, निविदा GeM के माध्यम से ही स्वीकार्य होगी।
M.S. [illegible]/2026
अपर सचिव

34001/54/2526
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, CENTRAL (R&B) CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR
Mail I.d secbbsr@gmail.com
E-procurement Tender Call Notice No. 25 of 2025-26
No. 638 (Estg.) Bhubaneswar the 10th February -2026
The Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for Three number Building works to be received in online bidding, double cover system for improvement work as detailed in: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from 5.00 P.M. of 18.02.2026 to 5.00 P.M of 06.03.2026. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened at 5.30 P.M of 06.03.2026 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.
Sd/-
Er. M. K. Mahananda
Chief Construction Engineer
Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-34001/34/0061/25-26/0005

TAMILNADU POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LTD.,
[illegible]
e-tender Invitation for Bids No. [illegible] Dated: 12.02.2026
[illegible]
Superintending Engineer, South Circle, TNPHC Ltd

32001/98/2526
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
BRUTANG & HADUA IRRIGATION PROJECT, DASAPALLA
E-mail: ccebhip@gmail.com
No. 137 Date: 11.02.2026
Notice Inviting Tender
"e" Procurement Notice No. CCE-BHIP-05(01-05)/2025-26 Dt. 11.02.2026
Invites online percentage rate tender in double cover through e-procurement for execution of the Civil, PH & Electrical works.

1	Name of the Works	02(Two) number of buildings work and 03(Three) number of Road Work
2	Approximate Estimated cost	1.28 Crores to Rs.3.17 Crore
3	Period of Completion	11 (eleven) months
4	Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal	From 11.00 hours of Dt. 20.02.2026 to 17.00 hours of Dt.13.03.2026
5	Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	17.00 hours of Dt. 13.03.2026
6	Date of Opening of Technical Bid	11:00 Hours of 16.03.2026
7	Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid	Chief Construction Engineer, Brutang & Hadua Irrigation Project, Dasapalla, Nayagarh-752084, e-mail id :- ccebhip@gmail.com

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal of Odisha Government https://tendersodisha.gov.in. All information, notices, addendum, corrigendum, cancellation notice etc. if required, will be published in this portal.
Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Brutang & Hadua Irrigation Project, Dasapalla
OIPR-32001/32/0011/25-26/0005

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No: CEE/T&P/SEE-1&2/2025-26/9788-807 Date: 13.02.2026
BRIEF SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)
KPTCL invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry numbers on Partial Turnkey basis.

Sl. No.	Enquiry Nos. and Name of the works
1.	KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3316
	Combined Package for: **Work A:** Establishing 1x20 MVA,110/33kV & 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at **Anthapura village** with Construction of associated line for a distance of **14.98Kms** in Sandur Taluk, Ballari District and 2 nos. Terminal Bays at 110/11kV KIADB Kuduthini sub-station in Ballari Taluk, Ballari District. **Work B:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at **Belagal Thanda village** with associated line for a distance of **8.226 Km** in Ballari Taluk, Ballari District. **Work C:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV Sub-Station at **Sandur town (Doulathpura)** with associated line for a distance of **0.416km** in Sandur Taluk, Ballari District.
2	KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3317
	Combined Package for: **Work A:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Bandri Village** along with associated lines and terminal bays in Sandur taluk, Ballari District. **Work B:** Establishing 2X20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Kanchikere (Satturu)** with associated line for a distance of **2.996km** in Harapanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagar District. **Work C:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Narasimhagiri (Belligatti)** associated line for a distance of **0.679km** in Kudligi Taluk, Vijayanagara Distict. **Work D:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **G.Kodihalli** with associated line for a distance of **2.91km** in Hagari Bommanahalli Taluk, **Vijayanagara** District. **Work E:** Establishing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Madalagere (Bandri Cross)** with associated line for a distance of **9.315km** in Harpanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagara District. **Work F:** Construction of 66kV LILO line from existing 66kV **MSD (Munirabad-Sokke-Davanagere)** SC line to 66kV Venkatapura sub-station and Construction of 2 nos. of 66kV Terminal Bays at existing **Venkatapura** sub-station for a distance of 0.952km in Hosapete Taluk, Vijayanagara District.
3	KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3318
	Establishing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Jalikatte** along with associated 66kV line using 630 Sqmm UG Cable for a distance **4.889Kms** and Stringing 2nd Circuit on 66kV Chitradurga-Pandarahalli SC line for a distance of **7.658Kms** and Construction of 1No 66kV Terminal Bay at 220kV/66/11kV Chitradurga sub-station in Chitradurga Taluk & District.
4	KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3314
	Establishing 2x12.5MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Kalathmadu** with associated 66kV LILO line for a distance of **1.925kms** in Virajpete Taluk, Kodagu District.

The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in with hypertink "E Procurement KPTCL" or https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after **18.02.2026 at 15:00 hrs for Sl.No: 1, 2 & 4 and 19.02.2026 for Sl.No: 3. Last date & time for receipt of Bids and any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the Karnataka Public Procurement portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours. All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.
Sd/- Chief Engineer, Electy. Tendering & Procurement, KPTCL, Indhana Bhavana, Anand Rao Circle, Bengaluru-560009.

34001/75/2526
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-mail: [illegible]@gmail.com
Bid Identification No. CE-Bridges - 17 / 2025-26
1. The Chief Engineer (Bridges), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road & Bridge work as detailed below :
2. Nature of work. : Road work
3. No. of work : 01 no.
4. Tender paper cost : Rs.10,000.00 (on-line)
5. Class of Contractor : Special/ Super Class Contractor
6. Available of bid document in the website : From 10.00 AM of 18.02.2026 to 5.00 PM of 11.03.2026
7. Date of opening of Bid : Dt.12.03.2026 at 11.30 AM
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tenderodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Bridges, Odisha, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-34001/34/[illegible]/25-26/0030

25001/172/2526
By E_Mail/e-Despatch
E_Mail ID : serw_balasore@yahoo.in
Ph-No-[illegible]
Balia, Balasore
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE
"e" Procurement Notice for Bridge Work
Identification No. - Online Tender - Bridge NCB No. 60 of 2025-26
Letter No. 630/WE Date : 07.02.2026
1. Name of the work : Bridge works.
2. Total No. of work : As per annexure
3. Estimated Cost : As per annexure
4. Eligible Class of Contractor : As per annexure
5. Period of Completion : As per annexure
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding From	Availability of tender On-line for bidding To	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O C.C.E.R.W. Circle, Balasore: Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	NCB No. 60 of 2025-26	18.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	06.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	05.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	07.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

• Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd- Er. Duryodhan Behera
Chief Construction Engineer
R.W. Circle, Balasore
OIPR-25001/25100/1/25-26/0005

4001/19/2526
idco | ODISHA NEW OPPORTUNITIES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL)
IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR.
Bid Identification No. Civil/EST-46/2025-26
TCN No 3088, dt. 03.03.2026
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
1. Name of the Work : Construction of Block level Stadium, Jhumpura Block under Keonjhar District with O&M for 05 years
2. Value of the Work (Approx. Excluding O&M) : Rs. 12.01 Crore
3. Period of completion : 12 (Twelve) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding :
i. Start Date : 18:00 Hours of dt 17.03.2026
ii. End date : 15:00 Hours of dt.06.03.2026
iii. Opening date : 16:00 Hours of dt.06.03.2026
Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/-
Chief General Manager (Civil)
IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-40014/[illegible]/25-26/0003

11001/17/2526
MADHUSUDAN LAW UNIVERSITY, CUTTACK
(State University Established under The Odisha Universities Act, 1989)
Station Road, Cuttack, Odisha-753 003
Website: www.mlu.ac.in
Letter No: MLU/Estt./[illegible]/2026 Date: 13.02.2026
ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF TEACHING POSTS
Applications are invited from eligible candidates for the filling up of following regular teaching posts of the university.
1. Professor: 36 posts (Law)
2. Associate Professor: 12 posts (Law) and
3. Assistant Professor: 32 posts (24 for Law and 8 for Non-Law).
➢ Last date of submission of application and payment of Application fee through online mode : 17th March, 2026 till 11:59 pm
➢ Last date for receiving the hard copy of Application along with the attested copies of Testimonials to the University Office : 08th April, 2026 till 5:00 pm
After successfully applying online, the self-attested copies of all the required documents along with application form should reach the undersigned on or before last date as mentioned above.
Applications received after last date will not be considered.
For details visit the University Website, www.mlu.ac.in.
(Form shall be available online from 17th February, 2026)
Sd/- Registrar
Madhusudan Law University
Cuttack
Place: Cuttack
Date: 14.02.2026
OIPR-11001/11001/1/25-26/0001

25001/166/2526
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF
RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION
JAL "O" PARIMAL BHAWAN, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR-751001, ODISHA
Tel: 0674-2395734, e-mail: cerwsodisha@gmail.com
NOTICE INVITING BID
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT FOR EXECUTION OF RURAL PIPED WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS ON EPC CONTRACT
No. 1577 / Date: 13.02.2026
The Engineer-in-Chief, RWS&S, Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites proposals for Consultancy Services for engagement of Authority's Engineer (AE) for supervision of Consultancy Services for Authority's Engineer for supervision of the work "Mega PWs to 26 GPs of Sambalpur District and 82 GPs of Jharsuguda District including 10 years O&M on the basis of National Competitive Bidding for the works detailed in the table given below. The firm is advised to examine carefully all instructions in the RFP Document.

Sl No.	Name of the Rural Water Supply Project	Bid ID No.	Assignment Period (months)	Availability of Bid Documents for Online From	To
1	RFP for Consultancy Services for Authority's Engineer for supervision of the work "Mega PWS to 26 GPs of Sambalpur District and 82 GPs of Jharsuguda District on EPC mode of contract".	[illegible]	12 months (Twelve Months)	17.00 hours of 18.02.2026	17.00 hours of 18.03.2026

Name & address of officer inviting Bid: Engineer-in-Chief, RWSS
Jal "O" Parimal Bhawan, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar
Ph: 0674-2395734/ 0674-2531533, e-mail: cerwsodisha@gmail.com
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-25001/25003/1/25-26/0001 Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief, RWSS

AI investments may top $200bn, $90bn already pledged: Vaishnaw

'Will Unveil Sovereign Models At Summit To Rival OpenAI, Gemini'

Times News Network

New Delhi: Ahead of next week's AI Impact Summit, Union information technology minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday said that investments in the infrastructure layer of artificial intelligence may top $200 billion with commitments of around $90 billion already received.

"We are working on all five layers of the AI stack. Conventionally, our strength has been providing IT services. Now, we have to convert this into providing AI-based services. The IT industry too has worked in recent years on this changing business model. It has invested in creating new tools and reskilling their workforce, so they can provide AI services," Vaishnaw said, while addressing the ET NOW Global Business Summit.

He added that after the UK, South Korea and France, India is set to host the biggest AI Impact summit next week, with more than 20 Heads of State and govts attending the event.

"At the summit, we will be launching our bouquet of sovereign models. On so many parameters, the models are better than Open AI, Gemini Pro and Deep Seek, giving us confidence that India can develop models on very frugal resources," said the minister, who is also in charge of railways and information and broadcasting ministries.

THE TIMES GROUP — ET NOW GBS Global Business Summit — Spark Capital — Bennett

Highlighting the development in the third layer of AI stack, Vaishnaw stressed that progress in semiconductor development — the "chip layer" — had been significant, with startups and research teams developing cutting-edge solutions that are expected to bear fruit in the coming years.

Vaishnaw also noted electronic goods will be among the top two exported goods soon.

"One of the key things Europeans wanted from India was electronic goods in the FTA. They wanted electronic items of all kinds for their industry and consumers, because we are a trusted country. India will become a trusted partner in the semiconductor and electronics value chain," Vaishnaw said.

The minister said AI is set to outpace all previous industrial revolutions and technological shifts, necessitating the need for industry and society to remain prepared for this swift transformation, as India's coordinated push across talent, models, chips and applications will help position the country at the forefront of the global AI revolution.

> **One of the key things Europeans wanted from India was electronic goods in the FTA. India will become a trusted partner in the semiconductor and electronics value chain**
> ASHWINI VAISHNAW, IT minister

Sharing the progress on the first bullet train project, Vaishnaw said that the first section between Mumbai and Ahmedabad will open in 2027.

He also said that the proposed Bengaluru-Chennai corridor could reduce travel time to just 73 minutes, thus bringing the two cities much closer and boosting economic activity.

"Our engineers have really lived up to the challenge. Our industry too has gone through that learning curve and is practically self-sufficient in the entire high speed train technology. That is why Prime Minister Modi has announced seven new bullet train corridors, which will connect large parts of the country and transform the entire transportation industry. We are also going to standardise the entire system so that anyone in the world can come and participate. We will have a large role for the industry as well," he added.

On wider railway reforms, Vaishnaw said the ministry is working on "52 reforms in 52 weeks" in 2026, with two new reforms slated to be announced on the same day. Seven reforms have already been implemented and the rest are in progress.

"These changes aim to improve overall travel experience, especially for daily passengers belonging to the low- and middle-income families. They remain our most important customers in the railways. We have been able to reduce accidents by about 90%. We want to further reduce it," he said.

S&P Global chief: India's post-Covid expansion among most consistent for any major economy

Times News Network

New Delhi: Driven by structural reforms, entrepreneurial energy and a forward-looking approach to debt and development, India's post-Covid expansion has been among the most consistent for any major economy, with expectations remaining strong for the medium term, Yann Le Pallec, president, S&P Global Ratings said on Saturday.

"In our latest report, we explored how India is navigating a new global reality and what we found was a story of resilience, but also one of ambition which is at the core of Viksit Bharat 2047," Le Pallec said, while highlighting India's sustained commitment to fiscal discipline, targeted public investments and credible policy frameworks that have enhanced confidence in the country's long term growth trajectory.

Pointing to the link between trust, transparency, confidence and capital flows in a rapidly changing world economy, he said that few economies understand better than India that the "price of trust is truly the price of growth" and when trust breaks down, the cost of capital becomes a tax on progress.

> **Few economies understand better than India that the price of trust is truly the price of growth and when trust breaks down, the cost of capital becomes a tax on progress**
> YANN LE PALLEC, President, S&P Global Ratings

Referring to the growing depth of India's domestic bond market and rising foreign participation, Le Pallec said inclusion of Indian govt bonds in global indices can significantly increase overseas investment and expand funding opportunities for domestic companies over coming years. Such developments, he said, strengthen the country's financial ecosystem and support long-term growth.

"This evolving distribution of trust aligns with the broader structural shift in the global economy. The centre of the global economy continues to move east. Emerging markets are expected to represent two-thirds of global growth this year, a trend which is supported by domestic policy predictability at a time when global uncertainty is rising," he said.

Le Pallec stressed that trust has always been at the heart of financial systems as credit ratings were created to help investors assess risk in emerging industries. Over time, standardised ratings became an important benchmark for global investors, enabling informed decisions and greater transparency during periods of uncertainty, including major economic downturns.

According to Le Pallec, the role of credit ratings has remained largely unchanged in principle, providing independent assessments of risk, but the environment around them has transformed dramatically as global markets today face rising geopolitical uncertainties, shifting trade rules and changing policy dynamics, all of which influence the way trust is formed and maintained.

He said that the global order built on predictable trade and policy frameworks is undergoing structural change. As trust weakens in certain relationships, countries and investors are increasingly focusing on diversification. This includes reducing exposure to concentrated risks, seeking new partnerships and strengthening domestic financial systems. While these adjustments may increase costs in the short term, he suggested they can also provide long term resilience.

Strategic sovereignty a guiding imperative in reshaping global economy, say CEOs

Times News Network

New Delhi: In a rapidly reshaping global economy, strategic sovereignty has emerged as a guiding imperative, as nations navigate global supply chains while safeguarding critical capabilities in an increasingly fragmented world, global business leaders said.

During a panel discussion, KPMG India CEO Yezdi Nagporewalla, global leaders across new age economy, technology and defence, financial inclusion, and consumer sectors, discussed the challenges and opportunities of operating in a fragmented global economy.

Highlighting the core of strategic sovereignty in a world of global supply chains, General Atomics Global Corporation CEO Vivek Lall, chief executive of, said, "It is about reducing vulnerability to geopolitical choke points, whether in energy, technology, manufacturing, logistics, or data. Strengthening domestic capabilities while building trusted international partnerships is critical, and it is equally important to develop resilience against any potential choke points. As the global community moves forward, the underlying theme is going to be human resource training and human resource knowledge, capabilities. This is often underemphasised, but at the root of strategic sovereignty is a strong focus on human resource development."

> **There's no better place to see strategic sovereignty in action than in India. When the country began liberalising 30 yrs ago, it was hungry for capital... Today, the situation has reversed: Capital is chasing India**
> KISHORE MOORJANI, CEO - Alternatives, CapitaLand Investments

Talking about how strategic sovereignty is reshaping the flow of global capital, Kishore Moorjani CEO - Alternatives, Private Funds CapitaLand Investment said, "Perhaps there's no better place to see that in action than in India. When the country began liberalising over 30 years ago, it was hungry for capital and attracted significant foreign institutional investment. While FII capital is important, it can be fickle. Today, the situation has reversed: capital is chasing India... We respect the sovereignty of the markets we operate in and align our investments accordingly. We come to build India, not just trade."

Discussing the role of financial institutions in building national resilience, Mary Ellen Iskenderian, president & CEO of Women's World Banking, said, "True economic resilience depends on inclusive access to savings, credit, insurance, and digital payments. Financial inclusion strengthens households and communities, particularly in the face of climate shocks and economic volatility, reinforcing national stability from the ground up."

On the question of how consumer brands maintain core identity while navigating local cultures, regulations, and consumer expectations, Mike Jatania, CEO and chairman The Body Shop & co-founder of Aurea, said: "For brands operating across borders, maintaining identity while respecting national priorities is essential. If your brand has a clear purpose and core values, it can adapt locally without losing its identity. Purpose, transparency, and trust are economic currency."

Change of land-use certs to go online for 10 industrial hubs: Saini

Times News Network

New Delhi: Haryana is coming up with a policy to enable investors to get the Change of Land Use (CLU) certificate online for setting up of industrial units in the upcoming 10 Industrial Model Townships (IMTs) without visiting any govt office, CM **Nayab Singh Saini** said on Saturday.

Highlighting efforts made by the state for years, he said today 350 of the Fortune 500 companies have their offices in Haryana and new industrial townships will attract more of them in the near future. Saini said the industrial infrastructure in the state is being developed with careful planning to ensure that there are no issues over the next 50 years.

He said Haryana will play a big role in attracting investment after the India-EU trade deal and members of Haryana European Trade Association have welcomed this and have shown greater interest in more investment in the state. Recalling his meeting with the trade association, the CM said suggestions received from them will be incorporated in the upcoming state budget and every effort is being made to make the state investment-friendly.

Saini said the recent India-EU trade deal, termed as 'mother of all deals', has come as good news for industries. "Earlier when I met people in Panipat they were worried about high tariffs. Now that situation has changed."

On the state's focus to deal with stubble burning and use of chemical fertiliser, the CM said Haryana will soon establish its identity in natural farming and reduce chemical soil nutrients. "We had appealed to farmers not to burn crop residue and because of our efforts, incidents of stubble burning have reduced by up to 95%. We will eliminate this problem," Saini added.

In response to questions on civic issues plaguing Gurgaon, which has become a hub for corporate sector, the CM said a drainage plan has been prepared for low-lying areas of Gurgaon for draining out water to Yamuna and use for farming after treating it at sewage treatment plants. He said a comprehensive plan has also been formulated to ensure that Gurgaon does not face drinking water shortages over the next 50 years.

Building in India, exporting to world, assert biz honchos

Times News Network

New Delhi: India's consumer market, young demographics and digital infrastructure are giving companies edge, industry leaders said while discussing how businesses are building for India and exporting those models worldwide.

Shiva Shailendran Sekar, director and head of revenue, categories at Uber India & South Asia, said the country's uniqueness is its strength. "The kind of challenges and opportunities that we have in India are unique, which helps us in multiple ways," he said.

Many of Uber's recent innovations are "India First products" now being exported. "A lot of tech for Uber globally is being built out of India," he said, adding that the company has evolved from a four-wheeler ride-sharing service "to becoming a one-stop shop for mobility for all consumer needs in India".

"What works in India will definitely work in a lot of other markets," Sekar said, adding that India offers the advantage of testing and refining products at scale before taking them overseas.

Rajesh Chandan, chairman of Elements Wellness and Indiashopee, said low internet costs — "just Rs 10-15 per GB" — have created a powerful scaling advantage, enabling tier two and tier three cities to export goods and reach a global audience.

With fully digital transactions and over 2,350 customer resolutions handled, he said the digital ecosystem builds trust among small traders. But scale must be matched by quality. "If we want our products to be picked in the world, then we need to focus on quality," he said, adding that with India opening up through FTAs and gaining global acceptance, he sees greater potential in preventive healthcare.

Ruchika Panesar, country head for India at NatWest Group, said India's advantage lies in "the demographics" and "talent". "When we bring interns into the organisation, it's equally important that they are working on production scale projects rather than dummy ones," she said.

Sanjay Salunkhe, CMD of Jaro Institute of Technology, said India's youth is its strongest asset. "65% of our population is below the age of 35."

Govt cheating cotton farmers, textile exporters in US trade deal, says Rahul

Times News Network

New Delhi: Congress neta Rahul Gandhi Saturday accused the govt of "cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters in the country through the India-US interim trade deal" and alleged that the agreement "is likely to inflict deep damage on both sectors".

"18% tariff vs 0% — let me explain how the PM and his cabinet are spreading confusion on this issue. And how they are cheating India's cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India-US trade deal," he said on X.

"Bangladesh is being given zero % tariff benefit on garment exports to US — the only condition is that they import American cotton," he said.

> **A visionary govt that thinks in the national interest would have negotiated a deal that protects and ensures prosperity of both cotton farmers & textile exporters. But exactly the opposite has happened...**
> RAHUL GANDHI

"After the announcement of 18% tariff on Indian garments, when I raised the question in Parliament about the special concession being given to Bangladesh, the reply from a minister of Modi govt was: 'If we also want the same benefit, we will have to import cotton from America'," Gandhi said.

"Why was this fact hidden from the country till now? And what kind of policy is this? Is this really any kind of choice, or is it a trap designed to push us into a 'well in front, ditch behind' situation?" he asked.

"If we import American cotton, our own farmers will be ruined. If we don't import it, our textile industry will lag behind and get destroyed," Gandhi claimed.

Highlighting the importance of textile industry and cotton farming, he said that "attacking these sectors means pushing millions of families into the pit of unemployment and economic crisis."

He further said, "A visionary govt that thinks in the national interest would have negotiated a deal that protects and ensures the prosperity of both cotton farmers and textile exporters. But exactly the opposite has happened..."

Shah, Goyal slam Rahul for spreading 'lies'

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Puducherry/Mumbai/New Delhi: Home minister Amit Shah and commerce & industry minister Piyush Goyal have slammed LoP Rahul Gandhi for spreading "lies" on the trade deal with the US.

Addressing a public meeting at Karaikal, Puducherry's enclave, Shah said that Rahul's claim that govt had failed to protect the interests of farmers and fishermen while working out the deal was a lie. "Rahul Gandhi has been lying repeatedly. His policy is to lie, lie loudly and repeat it," he said. Shah asserted that Modi govt had protected the interests of farmers and fishermen.

Talking to media in Mumbai, Goyal hit out at Rahul for "lies and misleading claims" on the deal with US and asserted that Indian farmers and textiles industry stand to benefit from the interim deal and other FTAs finalised by Modi govt.

He told reporters that importing energy — oil and LNG from the US — will help India. "Increasing imports and having more suppliers would help India secure crude oil at more competitive prices."

The minister said that the LoP was "immature" and was trying to scare Indian farmers about a fall in demand for cotton. "Rahul Gandhi does not have any understanding of economy; he is tweeting false and misleading information on social media. He is thousands of miles away from the truth. Both India's cotton cultivation capacity and requirement will grow. This policy of importing material and processing it for export is an old practice in global trade."

Amit Shah and Piyush Goyal

Goyal added, "He does not know that the US' production of cotton is very small, and after domestic consumption, US exports of cotton and yarn are worth only $6 billion. He also doesn't know that Bangladesh imports $2.7 billion of cotton from India, which they will have to continue doing because the US does not have any surplus cotton. Hence, with the huge potential for growth in our textile sector, demand for Indian cotton will continuously grow and increase income of farmers."

Besides, he said, since UPA regime, India's foreign trade policy and the SEZ law have allowed duty-free import of raw material, including cotton, for producing textiles and export goods. "So, when Rahul Gandhi attacks 'zero-duty import for export', he is attacking policies his own party started!"

The minister maintained that the FTAs finalised by India have opened a potential textile market of Rs 46 lakh crore as against the current Rs 4 lakh crore worth of textiles shipments and the deals offered large growth potential that will create lakhs of jobs.

Speaking in Puducherry, Shah paid tributes to CRPF personnel martyred in the Pulwama attack. The home minister also complimented NDA govt led by All-India NR Congress founder-president and CM N Rangaswamy for curbing corruption, ensuring political stability and strengthening Puducherry's autonomy. He alleged that the previous Congress govt led by former CM V Narayanasamy had reduced Puducherry into an "ATM for Gandhi family".

During Congress regime in Puducherry, Gandhi family in Delhi was controlling the UT and was making decisions on its own, but now it's NDA govt that makes them, he said.

2 journo bodies condemn Rahul talk on media impartiality

Times News Network

New Delhi: Two journalist bodies on Saturday criticised Congress neta Rahul Gandhi for questioning the impartiality of mediapersons, saying political leaders must use respectful language while addressing the press, especially in public spaces like the Parliament.

The reaction came after Gandhi, speaking to reporters outside the Parliament earlier in the week, asked journalists to be more objective in their coverage. Responding to queries on the treasury benches considering a privilege notice against him over his recent speech on the Budget, the LoP said media should not merely repeat what it is told.

Condemning the remarks, National Union of Journalists and Delhi Journalists Association issued a joint statement calling Gandhi's comments inappropriate. "The LoP targeting and insulting media personnel in such a manner is highly condemnable," NUJ president Ras Bihari said. He added that such statements amount to an attack on press freedom and undermine the role of media in a democracy.

DJA president Rakesh Thapliyal and general secretary Pramod Kumar Singh said journalism exists to question those in power and provide accurate information to the public. Associating the media with any particular political party, they said, harms the professional dignity and independence of journalists.

Rahul Gandhi had told reporters, "You are not totally employed by BJP. At least try a little bit of objective stuff. It gets really shameful. It's too much."

EC asks Bengal govt to comply with its directives by Feb 17

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New Delhi: EC has directed West Bengal chief secretary Nandini Chakravarty to comply with its directives regarding payment of honorarium to BLOs, appointment of suitable SIR/poll-related officers, the rescinding of unilateral transfer of roll observers and registration of FIRs against errant officers, by 5.30pm on Feb 17.

Chakravarty was summoned by EC here Friday to discuss matters pending with Bengal govt, including one in which EC has sent multiple reminders. EC had last written to Bengal govt on Feb 4, seeking a compliance report by 3pm on Feb 9, 2026.

Among the key issues flagged by EC is the failure of state govt to pay full honorarium to BLOs. As of now, Bengal govt has paid Rs 7,000 as honorarium to BLOs, as against Rs 13,000 payable as per EC's guidelines. BLO supervisors, for whom EC has fixed an honorarium of Rs 20,000, have not been paid at all. Chakravarty has now been directed to immediately release the pending amount.

The poll panel also asked Chakravarty to comply with its directives dated 05.08.2025 for registration of FIRs against two electoral registration officers, two assistant EROs and one data entry operator over their alleged failure to perform their statutory duty and for violating data security policies. A reminder in this case was last sent to West Bengal on Jan 2, 2026.

EC to begin tour of poll-bound states

EC will kick off its visits to poll-bound states to assess poll preparedness, with a tour of Assam from Feb 16 to 18, according to sources in the commission, reports **Bharti Jain**.

Sources told **TOI** that CEC Gyanesh Kumar and ECs S S Sandhu and Vivek Joshi may visit Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in the last week of this month. The tour of Bengal and Kerala is likely to happen only in March; the dates are yet to be finalised.

Assembly polls are due in the four states and UT of Puducherry in April-May. An announcement is possible in the second half of March.

During their visits, EC will hold discussions with political party netas, chief secretary and DGP, district magistrates, and the brass of law enforcement agencies.

The commission also pressed its directive dated Jan 25 for suspension of Basirhat assistant electoral registration officer Sumitra Pratim Pradhan, who had "unauthorisedly deployed 11 additional AEROs to conduct hearing by issuing suo-motu order, in contravention of statutory provisions".

EC further directed the chief secretary to cancel transfer orders issued by state govt in respect of three electoral roll observers without consulting it.

Brahmaputra tunnel project a 'boost to NE connectivity': PM

▸ Continued from P1

PM Modi called the Brahmaputra tunnel project as a "landmark boost to connectivity in the northeast".

In a post on X, he said, "...This transformative project will enhance connectivity, reduce logistics costs and accelerate growth across Assam and the entire Northeast."

TOI has learnt that originally govt had included the connectivity between Gohpur and Numaligarh as a part of the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East in 2008 by constructing a bridge. But later a proposal was mooted to build a road tunnel beneath the Brahmaputra. Later, it was modified to have a common tunnel for both vehicles and trains.

A similar 22-km road-cum-rail tunnel passing through Chicken Neck corridor in the northeast is also in planning stage. Besides the tunnel, Cabinet approved three NH projects with a combined cost of over Rs 11,000 crore — a 107.7-km four-lane highway in Gujarat, a 154.6-km highway stretch in Maharashtra and an 80-km corridor of NH-167 in Telangana.

In rail sector, three multitracking projects covering 12 districts across Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra and Karnataka were approved at an estimated cost of Rs 18,509 crore. The approved projects will add 389 km to the existing network of railways. Multitracking works are scheduled for completion by March 2031. These include the laying of third and fourth line between Kasara and Manmad in Maharashtra, which will have the second longest tunnel on the rail network.

'Power dining' for the Anthropocene — vegetarianism stirs kindness into climate

India's state banquets can redefine celebratory cuisine for many of us — a pressing need in environmental crisis

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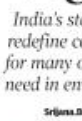

It isn't often, gentle reader, that a Presidential banquet becomes a topic of hot discussion. Generally these are calm occasions where diners make elegant speeches and nibble on petite bites, like delicately skewed peaches. Recently, however, as India saw a flurry of high-profile diplomatic visits, the accompanying Presidential dinners were followed by some chatter. This focused first on the vegetarianism of the menus — why, asked some, were guests served moos, shoots and fruits in this land of kormas and kebabs?

The next concern steamed up over the provenance of dishes. Some (with enviable amounts of free time on their hands) wondered why moringa soup, morels or bananas blossoms? This line-up left those more used perhaps to artery-popping rogan josh scratching their heads, not in josh but puzzlement.

At TE, following in the footsteps of time's thinkers, from Copernicus to Janaki Ammal, we try to demystify intellectual fugs that cloud our understanding. State banquet menus might seem a relatively prosaic matter compared to, say, the discovery of heliocentrism — but there is a link there that can make a difference to our knowledge of the world.

Vegetarianism has deep roots in India — ancient sovereigns, scholars and saints schooled for non-violence and conservation. Later, vegetarianism became identified with Mahatma Gandhi in a profound outcome of several histories in the making — and dreams of a future free of them. Gandhiji encountered vegetarianism, not just as a personal choice shaped by tradition, but a modern struggle in 19th century England. Britain was in the heyday of industrialisation, its gigantic wheels powered by wealth stolen via colonialism. As mills, migrants and 'poorhouses', diseases for workers and crimes in industrial belts spread, discontent began. Mass slaughterhouses took over and people grew horrifyingly unthinking while operating conveyor belts of cruelty — 'fit' by Ronald Dahl captures this loss of sentience by meat-producers and eaters. Thinkers drew a link between the expansion of industry and the spread of cruelty, brightly packaged and covered in satire.

Vegetarian societies started, linking the industrial slaughter of animals for cheap diets with growing unhappiness and poor health. Gandhiji landed amidst this turmoil — and saw parallels of power. The ruthless conquest of animals by humans was not very different from the subjugation of some humans by others. For him, being vegetarian was a liberation, both from the cruelty of humans to animals and the violence colonialists inflicted on their victims. This was a fundamentally modern moment — a choice made to change a future brimming with bloodshed, starting at one's own table.

Vegetarianism — and now, flexitarianism — expanded among the better-informed as people uncovered the links between industrialisation and cruelty. Hannah Arendt wrote of 'The Banality of Evil' about the Holocaust. However, her arguments apply to the meat industry too, where evil — the human proclivity for animal flesh and our obliviousness to the terror, pain and perishings of living beings — is made mundane, turned into the everyday, the quick snack, the artistic dish, tables of elegance where silken napkins stifle screams. It is this anguish feasts at India's Rashtrapati Bhavan do not normalise.

There is more food for thought here. We are now in the Anthropocene, the era of human impacts reshaping Earth. Huge industrial processes release emissions — these form a cover around Earth, refusing to let warmth dissipate into space. Altered temperatures and water flows around the world underline this science. However, many of us do not recognise these processes in our daily lives. Some, like electricity, are massive and need systemic-level change — but some come down to the individual.

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from the meat industry. Every stage of this industrial mega-system, from land which rivers herds for slaughter to the factories which murder them and the plastic and tin which carry bits and pieces to us, releases toxins that heat Earth. Soon, shopping such heat will be beyond our hands — but we still have a small window to make a choice.

These menus capture that hope — and celebrate India's cuisines from across the country. Every ingredient holds meaning — the 'rare' moringa (shaura), for instance, is softlting in India which produces the most moringa in the world. Such dishes travel the great expanse of India, are novel in nature, if not nouvelle (in truth, many would pay hefty prices for them in glittering restaurants) and sustainable. They fit a land which stands for empathy — and intelligence. They inspire us to see celebrations can mix fresh flavours with wisdom — and come tempered with a kindness we are in danger of forgetting.

Views expressed are personal

Times Evoke 'Cognoscenti' is an occasional series featuring ideas on our environment

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A state banquet is more than an occasion to eat —it is a moment in history when new choices can be made, evolving from troubling pasts to better futures

Photos: Getty Images & Stock

TASTES OF INDIA: Banana flowers, moringa, morels

CHANGE ON THE MENU: Recent state dinners signal new cuisine which respects science

STF busts SSC cheating racket in U'khand, 2 held

Accused Used Remote Access To Solve Questions

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Dehradun: Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh police special task forces (STFs), in a joint operation, busted a sophisticated cheating racket in the Staff Selection Commission's (SSC) online recruitment exam in Dehradun arresting two persons on Sat. The accused used remote-access software to solve question papers on candidates' computers during the exam.

Uttarakhand director general of police (DGP) Deepam Seth told **TOI**, "The cheating was being facilitated in the Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) recruitment exam conducted by SSC at an online exam centre in MKP Inter College in Dehradun on Friday. Acting on specific inputs, an STF team conducted a raid and found that the perpetrators were solving questions on candidates' screens using remote-access software".

The DGP added that given the sophistication of the operation and suspected involvement of an edutech firm, the probe may be expanded to a nationwide search.

Police have written to the SSC seeking details about the edutech firm, he said.

Two laptops hidden inside a discreet room on the exam centre premises were used to provide remote access to handlers

The arrested persons were identified as Nitish Kumar, from Uttar Pradesh, and Bhaskar Naithani, from Dehradun, Uttarakhand. "The two enabled unidentified handlers to access the computer systems of candidates using remote-access software, through two laptops hidden inside a discreet room on the exam centre premises. The handlers then solved the questions on the computers of candidates who paid them around Rs 10 lakh to pass the exam," said IG (STF) Nilesh Anand Bharne.

Bharne added, "A case has been registered under relevant sections...We are probing how many exams were conducted at the same centre and are trying to identify other persons involved."

(With inputs from Sandeep Rai in Meerut)

Std 12 student & BA grad perform C-sec, woman dies in UP; 2 held

Lucknow: The Ambedkar Nagar police arrested a Class 12 student and an arts graduate on Friday for allegedly conducting caesarean surgery at an unregistered private hospital that resulted in the death of a woman during childbirth, reports **Pathikrit Chakraborty**. Initial investigations revealed that the illegal hospital operated for five years and the duo had been conducting surgeries for several years, police said.

The accused were identified as Yogesh Verma (32), a BA graduate from Maliyar, and Shubham Vishwakarma (18), an intermediate student from Sultanpur. The two allegedly operated on patients at Navjeevan Hospital without medical degrees.

The deceased, Priyanka, was admitted to the hospital on Feb 5 for delivery. The incident triggered protests by the victim's family, after which the hospital operator, identified as Ruby fled, police said.

Priyanka's husband, Sandeep, lodged another FIR under BNS 105.

Commentator's refrain: Maintain game's spirit. Referee's call is final

▸Continued from P 1

Football has often mirrored deeper fractures within societies already under strain. The 1990 clash between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade came to symbolise Yugoslavia unravelling. The so-called "Football War" between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969 entered history as an example of how a match can ignite tensions already primed for conflict. In these instances, football did not invent grievance, it amplified it.

In Keithelmanbi, football was asked to restrain.

The organisers approached the tournament with caution. Senior Assam Rifles officers addressed the teams before kickoff and made the terms clear: play in the spirit of the sport, any attempt to injure an opponent would result in an immediate red card; an extremely severe offence would lead to disqualification of the entire team.

"Rioforeing is always contentious, so we used soldiers from outside the northeast," an officer told **TOI**. Security personnel lined the perimeter. From the commentary areas, a Hindi voice narrated play and returned so one appeal whenever tackles grew heavy: *"Khel hi sadbhavana banaye rakhein. Referee ke nirnay ka paalan karein."* Maintain the game's spirit. Referee's decision is final.

The first semifinal at 8am on Wednesday featured two 100% Meitei teams — New Keithelmanbi Team B and KTYWA Keinou. The second carried a heavier backdrop. Khonglong Naga Youth Club faced Haibung FC.

Days earlier, violence had flared between Kukis and Nagas about 100km away in Litan in Ukhrul district. Though Khonglong's village had not suffered direct damage, anxiety spread quickly. Naga youngsters too began night patrols. Families hesitated before allowing the team travel. "People were worried," one Khonglong player said. "But if we stop meeting completely, that is not good for the future."

This was the first Kuki-Meitei football match since May 3, 2023

Manipur dy CM visits Churachandpur, calls for reconciliation through sports

Churachandpur: Manipur deputy CM Losi Sikho became the first politician from the state to visit Churachandpur since ethnic violence erupted between Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities in May 2023, using a football tournament to press for peace and reconciliation, reports **MK Henry**.

Sikho arrived by helicopter on Saturday to attend the closing ceremony of the sixth edition of the Zomi National Day Football Tournament, drawing cheers from packed stands. Calling for calm across Manipur, he said: "Meiteis in Imphal miss you all. Govt is keen to bring back peace, normalcy and development."

Urging communities to learn from history, Sikho referenced the Kuki-Naga conflict. "We don't want such incidents to occur again," he said, invoking Christian values and adding that reconciliation must lead the way. Sports, he said, could help heal divides: "In sports, there is no religion, no caste, no boundary. Peace can return through sports if we really want it."

The deputy CM promised govt backing for young athletes and upgrades to local playgrounds, saying Churachandpur had "so many budding players". A pledge that drew applause. On security, he said conditions were improving and voiced optimism about talks. "Why not? There is a chance." His appearance was widely seen as a symbolic outreach to a district at the heart of the crisis.

On the pitch, there was no spillover. Haibung dominated in a largely one-sided contest. When the match ended, the handshake was steady and unforced. It set up a final few had predicted — the first Kuki-Meitei football match since May 3, 2023.

Haibung's story explains why reaching the final carried weight beyond sport. The squad's average age is 18. Instead of focusing on training, many found themselves playing night sentries. "For our own safety," one said. "That doesn't mean we want to fight another community."

"We don't sleep properly on those days," another player said quietly. "But it is our responsibility." They were excused from duty for the duration of the tournament.

Haibung coach Ngamgoulen (36) had returned from Delhi, where he had been preparing for the Manipur civil services exams, on April 28, 2023. Within weeks, his village was attacked five times. His cousin Nilson Kuki's house burned down. Movement became restricted. Reaching the nearest airport required crossing a buffer zone. With routes to Imphal airport blocked, residents travelled via Aizawl or Dimapur.

Gogo, as he is known, did not leave his village. "As the younger brother of the village chief, it was my duty to be there for my people." His belongings remain in Delhi.

Haibung defender Seminthang Haokip (20) now lives in a relief camp after his village was burned down twice and is still waiting for the next stage of his Territorial Army application. Full-back Thangkhopao Singsit (21) had been preparing for CDS examinations when his village was attacked in July 2023, leaving three villagers dead and one still missing.

Goalkeeper Chongouman Kipgen (21) ran a private school with his father that employed teachers from Imphal. Kuki, Naga and smaller tribes, and they were in the process of starting another school before the conflict made coexistence impossible. Middle-der Thangminlei Kipgen (19) teaches at the only functioning community-run school in the area, managed by Kuki Students' Organisation, after most qualified teachers left the state.

By the time the final began, the stands were full. Villagers had been brought in Army vehicles under armed escort, joining elders and locals. Senior Assam Rifles officers were present.

The first half was intense. New Keithelmanbi was in control. By half-time, the Meitei side had built a 3-0 lead. Haibung regrouped during the break and scored two goals soon after the match resumed. Midway through the second half, a tackle triggered protests and brief shoves before Assam Rifles personnel intervened. The commentator's reminder — *"Khel hi sadbhavana banaye rakhein"* — returned. The game concluded 5-2 in favour of New Keithelmanbi. There were five yellow cards in the match.

When the final whistle blew, players formed a line and shook hands without hesitation. The exchange was brief and routine. "We just played," one said after wards.

Security personnel remained until the teams dispersed. The Meitei side returned toward the valley. Haibung FC boarded Assam Rifles buses and travelled across the buffer zone under armed escort — to villages where night patrols would resume.

With secrecy and an ex in the picture, deciding whether to trust or walk away

To help readers cope with their anxieties in these stressful times, TOI's ***Talk it Out*** *series brings expert counsellors to answer your mental health queries. This week's advice is from clinical psychologist* ***Priya Jha***

For the past two years, I've been in a relationship with a man who belongs to another religion. From the beginning, he wasn't ready to open up about the relationship to his friends or anyone else, whereas I have shared about it with every person except my family. It's always me who takes care of him. After a fight, I'm the one reaching out to sort things out. Many times, I get frustrated and do not talk to him for days, but he doesn't contact me till I do and then, he often pretends as if nothing has happened. Recently, I also found him chatting with many women, including his ex-girlfriend. When I confronted him, he said he got triggered because I didn't trust him. He insisted there was nothing between them, but he had called her and even kept their couple photo as his phone wallpaper. He says he doesn't talk to her now but I don't know for sure. Should I trust him and give him a second chance? Please help.

– Anonymous

Your feelings of confusion, hurt, and self-doubt are completely understandable. For two years, you have been emotionally invested, transparent, and consistently taking responsibility for maintaining the relationship. In contrast, your partner has remained largely emotionally unavailable, avoidant of accountability, and reluctant to integrate the relationship into his social world. This imbalance itself is significant. At this point, it may help to reflect on this question: "Is this relationship meeting my emotional needs healthily and reciprocally?" What you are experiencing is emotional exhaustion and confusion. A healthy relationship requires mutual effort, openness, and accountability, not one person constantly adjusting. Giving someone another chance is only healthy if there are clear changes in behaviour, not just explanations or promises. The relationship shows signs of emotional imbalance and ongoing trust difficulties. Trust is sustained through consistent and respectful behaviour. When actions and assurances do not align, uncertainty and emotional strain increase. Assess whether the relationship currently provides emotional safety, mutual effort, and clear boundaries. Continuing it would require observable changes, shared responsibility for repair, and improved communication. In their absence, prioritising your own emotional well-being may be psychologically protective.

I am a 33-year-old woman working as a senior executive with a Bengaluru-based MNC. I am well positioned now and wish to focus on my career growth. However, my parents are pushing me hard for marriage. The man has grown up in Delhi and is working there. I do not want kids as it may come in the way of my career. What could be a good solution for me?

– Anonymous

This situation reflects a developmental and values-based conflict rather than the question of a 'right' or 'wrong' choice. At 33, prioritising career growth, autonomy, and self-direction is developmentally appropriate and psychologically healthy. Choosing to focus on one's career or deciding not to have children are valid life choices. Psychological well-being is closely linked to alignment between personal values and life decisions. Parental pressure around marriage often arises from cultural expectations, concern for stability, and fear of uncertainty, rather than disregard for the individual's aspirations. However, entering marriage primarily to reduce parental anxiety can lead to emotional distress, resentment, and long-term relational conflict — especially when there are mismatches around career goals, location, or parenthood. A healthier approach involves clarity around non-negotiables such as career goals, lifestyle preferences, and decisions about children, assertive yet compassionate communication with parents, and avoiding irreversible decisions made under emotional pressure. Transparency within relationships, especially regarding long-term values, is equally essential. Ultimately, mental health is best protected when people choose alignment over appeasement, even if this brings short-term familial discomfort.

I am a class topper and everyone expects me to score high marks in every subject. When my marks don't meet their expectations, they start lecturing me about how good I used to be and ask what has happened to me now. With all this pressure, I'm not able to go out and have fun with my friends. I'm always in my room solving sums and studying. Please help.

– Anonymous

What you are experiencing appears to be the impact of ongoing academic pressure and high expectations. Constant comparison with past performance can increase stress and affect both emotional well-being and concentration. It is important to understand that academic fluctuations are normal and do not reflect a loss of ability or worth. In fact, academic outcomes do not define your worth or ability. Continuous studying without adequate rest, recreation, or social interaction can impair concentration and learning, rather than improve them. A lack of balance may be contributing to your current difficulties. I recommend working towards a more balanced routine that includes structured study time, regular breaks, and opportunities for relaxation and social engagement. Additionally, learning to communicate the impact of this pressure to your parents or teachers can be helpful. If symptoms such as persistent anxiety, low mood, sleep disturbances, or loss of interest continue, seek professional support.

TalkitOut

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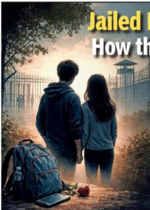
You can also visit bit.ly/TOITalkItOut or scan this QR code to send in your concern.

Jailed Romeos and heartbroken Juliets: How these teens got caught in Pocso net

As SC flags the need for a Romeo–Juliet clause, three cases show how a law meant to protect children is upending young lives



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A 10-month-old baby being raised without a father; a couple who spent a year in hiding, and a young man trying to piece his life together after five-and-a-half years in prison — these are just some of the ways one law has scarred multiple lives. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, 2012 was enacted to protect children under 18 from sexual assault, harassment and pornography. But it has also criminalised teenage relationships by mandating any sexual act between two minors — even when consensual — as a crime, with a minimum of 10 years of imprisonment for the offender.

Recently, the Supreme Court asked the central govt to consider introducing a 'Romeo-Juliet clause' after being confronted by yet another case of a consensual relationship caught in the web of the law. "Pocso cases filed at the behest of a girl's family objecting to romantic involvement with a young boy have become commonplace and consequent thereto these young boys languish in jails," Justice Sanjay Karol observed in a Jan 9 judgment.

Such a caveat would allow courts to take a more compassionate view of close-in age couples — for instance, where the girl and boy are within four to five years of each other. Govt data reveals that of the 40,846 child victims registered under Pocso in 2022, 21,318 or 52% were girls between the ages of 16-18 years. As a Delhi-based public prosecutor says, "Even when we know that the case is consensual, our hands are tied. We are forced to plead guilty before the courts."

But till such time as the amendment is brought, the law continues to upend lives. Sunday Times profiles four survivors reeling under its fallout.

An elopement that led to a 10-year-long legal struggle

Ramesh, 25 and Shweta, 17

Shweta had caught Ramesh's eye in 2015 when she was still in school. They lived in the same Delhi neighbourhood. She initially spurned him but grew to recognise his strength and love.

After he moved to Mumbai to work as an automobile mechanic, Ramesh could see Shweta only when he came back to Delhi to meet his parents, but they would have long conversations on the phone after his workday ended. One day, Shweta's brother caught her chatting and brought the house down. "My parents called him home. Ramesh offered to marry me, but they refused. They wanted me to marry someone from our village in Panipat," Shweta says. "Mahaul kharab ho gaya (the situation at home was bad). I was scolded, beaten, not allowed to go out." But real panic set in when her parents decided to get her married off in Dec 2015.

"She called me a couple of days before the wedding, saying she could no longer live at home. She had slipped out of the house and was calling from a pay phone outside. She refused to go back," Ramesh says.

Caught in a bind, the couple went to a friend's home in Manesar and got married in a temple. The excitement of being together soon disappeared when they realised that Shweta was still a few weeks away from turning 18 and they had committed a crime. Shweta says, "We didn't know about the law. But friends warned us that the police were looking for us. We switched off our phones and stayed low." With that began a year-long game of hide and seek. Having walked out of home without identity documents or much money, their survival depended on the generosity of friends and temporary jobs. With the fear of police harassment looming constantly, the couple shifted from Noida to Allahabad, and then back to Noida.

In Oct 2016, Ramesh decided to turn himself in to the police. A lawyer friend managed to get him out on bail immediately. Only after that the couple could heave a sigh of relief. "In 2017, we moved to Gurgaon and I got a job. But since the case was going on, we had to appear before court regularly," Ramesh says.

The case was finally thrown out in 2025, based on Shweta's testimony that it was not kidnapping and rape but an elopement. The couple have two children and have finally stopped living in fear. "If I had known that this would happen, I would have never run away from home," she says.

A hidden pregnancy and a couple torn apart

Anjana, 16 and Jitender, 21

Anjana lived with her mother and older brother in a single rented room in a crowded neighbourhood. Her father had passed away years ago. Her mother and brother worked long hours to keep the household running, while the 16-year-old stayed home, dropping out of school after class 9.

In 2024, a family moved into the room above theirs. Among them was a boy around her age. Casual conversations slowly grew into friendship, and eventually something more. Anjana became pregnant. Frightened, she kept it hidden from her family. "I lied to my mother about my periods," she says.

On an April night last year, when the house was quiet and everyone was asleep, Anjana went into labour. Alone and terrified, she delivered her baby by herself. It was only when her mother woke up to the sound of a baby crying that the truth came out. "There was a lot of blood. I don't remember anything much except that I fainted. When I woke up, Jitender (her boyfriend) was under arrest," she says.

Anjana was taken to the hospital for medical care. The hospital had to report an underage pregnancy to the police. Soon, an FIR was registered and Jitender arrested. His family tried several times to secure bail, but their attempts proved futile. Months passed. "I told my family that I wanted to be with him. But he still had to go to prison. Our biggest challenge was to get him out," she says. Nine months after he was arrested, Anjana told the court that she had been in a consensual relationship and wanted to marry Jitender. Her family even took out a loan to pay Jitender's bail, and he was finally released last month.

He had been the sole earning member before his arrest, and his absence left his family struggling. While his case drags on in a Delhi court, their 10-month-old son is growing up in the shadow of uncertainty. Both Anjana and Jitender live with their families and hope that they will have a life together someday.

They cried rape, he claimed love, but no one listened

Madan, 22

Madan met his girlfriend at a carpentry job in Rohini in 2019. They were involved in a serious relationship for a year when he approached Puja's family. But he was snubbed. The two continued to meet but in private. Then in Sept 2020, Puja left home, afraid her parents would get her married against her will. She was 17 and it turned out to be a big mistake. "My parents had died and I had only two brothers for support. I was scared that I would get into trouble," Madan says. They spent nearly a fortnight together, but Madan asked Puja to go back to her parents.

She did so reluctantly, only to be met with a firestorm of abuse. Within hours, an FIR was lodged, and the police were at Madan's doorstep. "I was at work, so they took my younger brother who was barely 13. I went to the station and was arrested. I kept saying I wanted to marry her, and we loved each other, but no one was willing to listen," he says.

Madan was in a crowded Tihar jail barrack that housed 25 people when it had room for 20. "There I found many like me who had been in relationships, but had been given prison sentences of 15 years, 20 years.... I lost all hope of ever being released. I thought I would die in jail," he says.

Puja's family had alleged that he had mixed an intoxicant in laddoos, kidnapped and raped her. His bail applications would be rejected. "My younger brother supported me. He took odd jobs, earned some money to support himself and kept visiting me," he says. After five and a half years, Madan was acquitted in Nov 2025 after Puja told the court that she had willingly left home to be with Madan.

Two months into freedom, he continues to live in fear. He survives on odd jobs and avoids speaking about his past. Last week, he found Puja on Instagram and sent her a message. "I still love her," he says.

(Names changed to protect identities)

More fest, less lit? Debate over lit fest boom heats up

As literary events multiply beyond metros, they show how books travel, sell and find new readers even as questions linger about substance & spectacle

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'TIS THE SEASON: Visitors browse at the Pune lit fest. Cities from Khajuraho to Kanchipuram now boast of fests with authors hopping from one to the other

For a sense of how far India's literary festival scene has travelled, listen to publisher Shailesh Bharatwasi run through his recent itinerary. Founder-editor of Hind Yugm and a key voice behind the Nayi Wali Hindi (New Hindi) movement, he now moves through a calendar that stretches well beyond the metros — from Moradabad to Hapur, Aligarh, Indore and Khajuraho, towns once far removed from the idea of multi-day literary gatherings. Now, each has a festival. For him, the boom is staggering. He estimates that if the budgets of all literary festivals currently taking place in India — a number, he believes, has far exceeded the reported 100 — were put together, the amount would run into several hundred crores.

When 250 people attend a session and 100+ buy books (40% conversion), and then line up to get their copy signed, that's customer acquisition most retailers would kill for

Anantha Padmanabhan
CEO, HARPERCOLLINS INDIA

Lit fests also allow agents and publishers to connect across languages and explore translation, film and OTT opportunities

Hemali Sodhi
LITERARY AGENT

"If that money is divided by the number of serious writers in India, they would get royalties they haven't achieved in their lifetime. At least, they would be motivated to write again," he says half-jokingly.

His quip captures both the promise and paradox of India's festival economy, which has been drawing international attention. A recent Guardian article wondered whether the country's abundance of literary festivals sits uneasily alongside low leisure-reading rates and modest bestseller numbers — asking, in effect, whether it had become more about spectacle than books.

BUILDING A READING CULTURE

But publishers argue that such metrics miss what festivals are actually doing on the ground. Anantha Padmanabhan, CEO of HarperCollins Publishers India, pushed back on LinkedIn, arguing that the "spectacle" of festivals is a strategy, not the problem.

Festivals, he wrote, draw crowds of up to four lakh over a weekend, build a reading culture beyond doomscrolling, and reposition books from "exam tools to lifestyle choices". He also challenged narrow benchmarks — such as English literary fiction selling 3,000-10,000 for a 'bestseller' — citing successes like the Malayalam novel 'Ram C/O Anandhi' selling three lakh copies and YouTuber Prajakta Koli's 'Too Good to Be True' crossing two lakh. "When 250 people attend a session and 100+ buy books (40% conversion), and then line up to get their copy signed, that's customer acquisition most retailers would kill for."

This conversion, says Ravi Dee Cee, international director of DC Books, is visible on the ground. "For many attendees, book buying has become as integral to Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) as attending sessions," he says, adding that festival-driven sales at KLF registered 100% growth that continued post festival.

"My dream is that every village and city hosts literature festivals. Spaces like these push back against the idea that there is only one 'right' way to think," says Sanjoy Roy, managing director of Teamwork Arts, which produces the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), the OG of lit fests in India. Twenty years ago, JLF began with just 18 writers, including William Dalrymple, and a modest audience of about 100, half of whom Dalrymple later joked were lost tourists.

What began as a small part of a heritage festival soon grew into what former New Yorker editor Tina Brown called "the greatest literary show on earth". Today, the JLF template — star-studded panels, heritage venues, music stages and food gullies — has gone nationwide. The highest concentration of these festivals is now in the Hindi heartland, points out Bharatwasi. Nobel-winning invitees and Insta-worthy soirees aim to boost both book sales and local tourism. For many midlist titles, publishers say a single festival can account for a significant share of annual sales, something regular bookstore distribution rarely manages. If the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair, one of India's oldest, closed last week with its highest-ever footfall — about 32 lakh visitors and a 15% rise in sales to Rs 26 crore — the fourth Kanchipuram District Book Festival, organised by local administration in Tamil Nadu and the Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India, saw over 8 lakh visitors generating around Rs 60 lakh in book sales.

The benefits go beyond book sales. "We need new avenues to promote books in this country, so literature festivals are a welcome way to reach new readers and generate excitement around books. Beyond that, they function as key industry hubs where agents and publishers connect across languages and explore translation, film and OTT opportunities," says literary agent Hemali Sodhi, who sees fests as energising both the cultural and business sides of publishing.

SALES RISE, SO DO QUESTIONS

But even as book sales and access rise, questions persist about whether some festivals have drifted from books towards star appeal, social visibility and sponsor pressures. Bharatwasi, for instance, wonders whether they genuinely promote reading culture or whether the 'lit fest' label is increasingly used to rebrand what were once smaller 'goshtis' or gatherings.

Often, no proper thought is put into planning sessions. "Moderators can be airdropped into the middle of any kind of panel," says a culture critic.

Rachna Kalra, a book publicist, says the constant travel, overlapping schedules and the pressure of managing multiple authors and events can be exhausting at times. "Some festivals end up scrambling for invitees at the last minute. Everyone wants big names. Without them, they can't grow, but without a reputation, big names won't come," says Kalra, adding that seasonal clustering also means the same authors are hopping from one festival to the next. "I want festivals to think about their purpose," adds Kalra. "Are they genuinely interested in books and authors, or just in building their own cultural profile?"

WHY LOCAL CONTEXT MATTERS

To stand out from the herd, some festivals are trying to do things differently. The travelling History Literature Festival (HLF), previously held in Ahmedabad, Pune and Bengaluru, builds sessions around historical themes rather than recent releases.

At Vidhi Utsav, a legal literature festival in Delhi, literary agent Priya Talwar has found unexpected value in stories that rarely surface. "While algorithms do their bit, these in-person events offer a unique opportunity to discover unfiltered voices," she says. "Less is more applies in writing, not necessarily writers' events."

Others have a strong local flavour. The White Owl Literature Festival, Nagaland's first major literary event launched in Feb 2024 in Chumoukedima, celebrates Northeast oral traditions through books, workshops and performances. Its third edition this Feb, hosted Japanese anime and manga animator Toshiyuki Honda of 'Doraemon' fame, reflecting Nagaland's strong anime and manga fan base. It included 'Stories by the Sacred Fire', an evening bonfire session with tribal elders, and a pre-festival marathon where professional runners run alongside persons with disabilities.

"We need to be conscious of how we programme and represent," says Mary Therese Kurkalang, who has curated several festivals in the Northeast, including Shillong Lit Fest and Sikkim Lit Fest. "We cannot replicate a lit-fest model that does not factor in local contexts."

At the end of the day, it's about connecting with the reader, says author and historian Probal DasGupta. Festivals in places such as Kasauli and Nagaland, he feels, often see more committed young readers. "The joy of seeing a serious reader emerge from a lit fest," he says, "is far greater for an author than book sales."

Now, comedians are playing Cupid

Tired of dating apps, young Indians are signing up for blind dates on stage, where stand-ups mix humour and matchmaking

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On a small comedy stage, two strangers sit blindfolded under bright lights while a live audience watches their first conversation. The hosts hover nearby, mics in hand. "Is he wearing a mundu?" she asks, eyes covered by a blindfold. "Yes," says the South Indian host.

"Is he dusky?" she wonders. "Yes... but wait..." the other host teases. "Did you say that because he's wearing a mundu?" "No," she laughs. "I'm into dusky guys."

When the blindfolds come off, the conversation chugs along easily. The young man from Kerala asks questions with nervous enthusiasm, the girl from Maharashtra listens, answers and smiles. Exes are mentioned. Cities are discussed. Okay, it's time to decide: are they willing to go on a date?

She nods a cheerful yes. He looks at the host and dissolves into nervous giggles: "No."

Startled, the host asks: "What happened?"

"I'm... into guys right now," he says.

Participants are picked after 'vibe checks', their conversations gently roasted by comics, offering an analogue alternative for those exhausted by swipes

Plot twists, awkward pauses, and impromptu confessions animate the world of assisted dating, where stand-up comedians swap punchlines for matchmaking. From Kochi to Gurgaon, ticketed comedy shows are turning into blind-date arenas, putting real people on stage to test chemistry before a live audience.

Participants are randomly picked or shortlisted after 'vibe checks', their conversations guided, moderated and gently roasted by comedians. Beneath the light-hearted surface, the viral format offers an analogue alternative to those fatigued by algorithmic swipes and screens.

"People who come to our show say they are tired of dating apps," says Abhishek Kumar who co-hosts First Move with Nirmal Pillai. The idea emerged accidentally through crowd work. "We'd be doing shows where one or two audience members were single, and we'd just say, 'You're single, you're single... why don't you go out?'" recalls Kumar. "We didn't realise setting people up randomly was a format back then." Soon, a structure emerged: improvised 'parent' interrogations, blindfolded participants, hypothetical Indian family scenarios and audience cues to gauge chemistry. The response convinced them the format could travel online.

A disclaimer on their YouTube channel acknowledges that Updating, an American blind-date show predates their own. "That's a raunchy show. Things get physical. I don't think we are ready for that," says Kumar.

Unexpected audiences have followed. Mothers have approached the duo seeking matches for their children, while parents in the crowd have absorbed conversations around gender fluidity. "At the outset, we tell people this isn't restricted to just a boy and a girl. We open windows to all kinds of orientation," says Kumar, recalling a queer couple who met during a Hyderabad show.

"India is opening up to dating as a concept and normalising conversations around expectations and emotional needs," says content creator and comedian Aanchal Agrawal whose YouTube show is called Assisted Dating. "It takes something very Indian — community involvement in romantic decisions — and applies it to the chaos of contemporary dating," she adds.

Onstage, blindfolds recreate intimacy while jokes break the ice and redirect moments that might otherwise tip into embarrassment. "We turn awkward moments into punchlines without making the participants the punchline," says Agrawal.

Relationship coach Radhika Mehta sees the genre's rise as part of a broader offline revival. "Apart from run clubs and silent reading book clubs, this is one space where you can maximise serendipity by showing up offline," she says. "It also means less obsession over height and package, and more focus on personality and sense of humour." In the process, the landscape of modern dating — especially from a woman's lens — opens up. From a young man who admits he is into "emotionally unavailable women" to a dancing software engineer defending pornography as art, the men arrive in a myriad shades.

Comedian Vivek Samtani's Andha Pyaar offers another variation: one woman, three suitors, all blindfolded, comedians as wingmen. The show became a YouTube hit and premiered on an OTT platform. While Kumar and Agrawal have met couples who say they are still dating, the fate of most matches — like the longevity of the format itself — remains unclear.

What's clear, though, is that not everyone wants to be assisted. In one episode of First Move, when a girl flashed a thumbs-up for a date, the boy turned to the hosts and said: "I'm ready to go on a date... as long as you guys aren't there."

LAUGH LINES: Comics (L to R) Aanchal Agrawal, Raunaq Rajani, Sumukhi Suresh, and Hoezaay help break the ice on the show

Invisible to most, rural India has joined the AI revolution. Some are helping build AI with data labelling. Others are using AI in farms, classrooms, content creation, even weather forecasts

Team TOI

THE VILLAGE LOGS IN

AI's quiet spread beyond metros

When 27-year-old Chandmani Kerketta finishes tending tomatoes and peas on her family farm in **Jharkhand**, she doesn't stop working. She switches on a computer and begins the kind of labour most people never see: tagging, annotating and checking data that trains artificial intelligence systems.

The work can be tedious, often boring, but someone needs to do it. There would be no driverless cars if someone didn't do this. Every 'smart' system — whether it is meant to recognise road markings, detect a disease in a crop, or interpret speech — needs loads of labelled examples. Kerketta is doing precisely that, data labelling.

Kerketta had earlier worked as an office assistant at a data processing firm in Ranchi. But now she can work from home and supplement her farm income. All she needs is a computer and an internet connection. Plus, she has taken a step on the digital ladder.

Kerketta joined an estimated workforce of at least 200,000 annotators in India's villages and small towns — a growing figure, and roughly half of the world's data-labelling workforce, according to US-based *Scry AI*.

India is no stranger to back-end work for global technology firms. Cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai are home to major international players. But the new story that's emerging is of a quiet transformation taking place in the country's remote areas.

AI is no longer something developed in the metros and consumed everywhere else. It is beginning to be made, used and adapted in rural India — on farms, in schools, on social media feeds, and in small-town offices.

CHANGING FIELDS: Chandmani Kerketta from Jharkhand does data labelling work after finishing her farm duties

AI FOR PEST CONTROL: Farmers of Kothiya village in Samastipur with agricultural scientists

FIGURING IT OUT: Anshar Ahamed of Bengal's Kaddiari upgraded himself from farming to a data entry job

AIMING FOR THE SKY: Baljinder Singh Mann has set up an AI-based automatic weather station in Punjab's Bofoke village

SMART AGRICULTURE: Farmer Sudhanshu in his IoT-based farm lab at Nayanagar village in Bihar's Samastipur

MORE TIME FOR STUDENTS: Aditi Chattopadhyay, headmistress at a Malda school, banks on AI to draft hundreds of official mails

Machine Learning

Data labelling sits at the bottom of the AI value chain, but it is what makes machine learning possible. Workers tag images, mark objects, transcribe audio, verify text, and perform quality checks so that AI models can "learn" what to recognise.

In Jharkhand, rural annotators like Kerketta describe it as a practical step up: an income that helped her to complete her studies and also contribute at home. Others describe the work's microscopic detail: labelling videos, frame by frame, or teaching a system how to classify behaviour in surveillance footage.

It's the same story in **Tamil Nadu**'s small towns. Indu Nadarajan travels along a rural road to a small-town office where she labels images for autonomous vehicles — road markings, headlights, animals — building datasets for clients sitting thousands of miles away. The work is technical in its precision, even if the job title sounds basic.

For firms, too, this model works. They have their headquarters in a major tech hub, delivery centres in small towns, and clients in the US or Europe. "Anybody can be anywhere," argues the founder of one such firm, Sridhar Mitta, who sees the internet as the real workplace, and small towns as the next frontier for micro-entrepreneurship and steady digital livelihoods.

For women, the social change can be as significant as the payslip. Amala Dhanapal, a colleague of Nadarajan and the first graduate in her family, describes AI work as both a gateway to learning and financial independence, particularly in conservative settings where education and careers can still be difficult goals.

But as the data-annotation industry grows, so do questions about what this work really offers, beyond wages.

While questions are raised about the value that data annotation jobs bring, beyond wages, entrepreneurs like Harshil Naik (left) say that training workers in future-ready skills is one way of broadening their potential and allowing them to explore roles beyond pure labelling

In Bengaluru, Harshil Naik, CEO and co-founder of Continuu, says his firm hires rural civil engineering talent to annotate data for computer vision systems and then trains them in future-ready skills, broadening what they can do beyond pure labelling. A Bengaluru-based not-for-profit, Karya, has built a parallel approach by creating datasets while expanding rural earning opportunities. It has engaged more than 30,000 people over time and paid out nearly $800,000 in wages.

Yet, a 2022 Google Research study based in Bengaluru points to a harsher underside: annotators interviewed described repetitive, tedious work, short job tenures (15-18 months), escalating productivity targets, unpaid overtime to meet deadlines, and heavy pressure to maintain 95-99% accuracy. Many had entered hoping that annotation would be a bridge to AI careers; instead, they found little career progression and limited pathways into AI/ML engineering roles.

A few villages away, Birendra Kumar of Kothiya illustrates the lighter-touch version of AI adoption: using apps like Plantix to detect pests and diseases early and AI-enabled drones for precision pesticide application. He also points to digital platforms and programmes that connect farmers to buyers and services, widening market access and improving margins.

In **Kerala**, AI is showing up in a different place: soil. Hari Varadarajan, a farmer in Koothrajambara, Palakkad, says an AI-assisted application called Sensekind has improved decision-making and yields. The system is built around sensors inserted into the ground to rapidly test soil health; it analyses multiple parameters, including nutrient levels and pH, and produces reports accessible via mobile phone. Varadarajan contrasts this with the older rhythm of soil testing: a process that could take weeks now compressed into hours.

In Parsenal, a small town in **Madhya Pradesh**'s Barwani district, around 40 farmers have been trained on a mobile application developed after years of research by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Barwani. The system analyses lab-tested soil and water samples, sends real-time alerts on irrigation and fertiliser schedules, offers multi-window weather forecasts, flags likely pest attacks, and even estimates crop maturity and expected yield to help plan harvesting. A larger expansion is being discussed through a state-level sugar mill association tie-up, with training planned for thousands.

Smart Classrooms

Education is another arena where AI is moving from urban buzzword to rural tool — used by administrators, students and, in some states, entire assessment systems.

In Malda, West **Bengal**, Aditi Chattopadhyay, headmistress of Ramkinkar Baij Vidyashram in English Bazar, uses AI to draft official letters and plan schedules for workshops — hundreds of pieces of paperwork that can otherwise take up her whole day. What AI buys her is time and structure: smoother administration and more attention for classroom needs.

Students are adopting AI as well. A class 10 student, Aditya Ghosh, says he used AI to prepare project work and to tackle difficult questions, especially when teacher support is limited. He stresses a detail many students learn quickly: output depends on input, better prompts get better results. For peers trying to improve English, AI becomes a constant practice partner in a way a crowded classroom cannot always provide.

Andhra Pradesh has pushed AI into rural education at scale. The state is using an AI tool to assess baseline competencies in Telugu, English and maths for nearly 14 lakh students across 26,000 rural schools. The system automatically scores reading fluency, detects errors, calculates words per minute, and then reassesses after structured training programmes to track improvement and identify learning gaps. In theory, it reduces manual workload and gives teachers and schools sharper data on where students are struggling.

In Bihar, the focus is also on capacity-building: training teachers through programmes like Nishtha to use AI tools and guide students through a more technology-driven curriculum. Alongside this, community initiatives such as i-Saksham have partnered with young women across multiple districts to teach basic AI literacy and everyday applications, broadening who gets to participate in the new toolset.

AI In Farms

If data labelling is rural India helping build AI, agriculture is where many farmers are beginning to use it, sometimes through sophisticated systems, sometimes through a single app.

In **Bihar**'s Samastipur district, Sudhanshu Kumar describes his 300-acre farm in Nayanagar as a high-tech 'agri-lab'. With smartphone-controlled drip irrigation, IoT (internet of things) sensors and AI-enhanced surveillance, he says he can manage irrigation and fertilisation across 35 acres single-handedly. He claims his annual income has jumped dramatically after adopting AI-based techniques and his farm has turned into a learning site, drawing thousands of visiting farmers.

Fillip To Content

In Arambagh, West Bengal, Sahid Sheikh represents a new small-town professional identity: a designer and content creator using AI as a primary tool for visual storytelling, brand content and campaigns. With nearly a decade in design and several years using AI tools, he has built workflows that let small teams produce at a speed and scale previously associated with bigger agencies and metro access. His trajectory — talks, panels, workshops, corporate training — signals a shift: small-town creators can now compete nationally and still live where they want.

In Kerala's Parassala, near the state's border with Tamil Nadu, Sarath Thaiseedharan is building a parallel path — freelancing as an AI video editor after hours, on top of contract work as a video editor at C-DIT. He says AI tools have changed the economics of editing: faster delivery, less repetitive labour, and clients reaching out from outside the state. The additional income — about Rs 10,000 a month — matters, but so does the psychological shift: one is no longer hindered by geography.

Even local arts are experimenting. In Malda, theatre enthusiast Somen Sarkar uses AI to adapt stories into short plays for student performances — using the tool not as a replacement for creativity, but as a quick bridge from idea to stage.

The AI Weatherman

In Bathinda, Baljinder Singh Mann has built an AI-based automatic weather station and linked it to his social media pages. A meteorology dropout and farmer, Mann gives forecasts in colloquial Punjabi — warnings for heavy rain, hailstorms, thunderstorms and lightning — because timing is everything when the weather turns. He says his system can provide hyperlocal forecasts from a three-hour window to two-week extended predictions, and he has added a lightning detector radar to study and predict lightning across a wide area.

His following — over four lakh on Facebook and Instagram, plus thousands on YouTube — shows the appetite for information that feels local, trusted and actionable.

Conclusion

Delhi will host the global AI summit this week. From OpenAI's Sam Altman to Google's Sundar Pichai to Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, all will be here. On overall AI vibrancy, Stanford has ranked India at No. 3, after the US and China, but ahead of Japan and South Korea. UK-based media group Tortoise's Global AI index 2024 notes that India entered the overall top 10 for the first time and ranks No.2 on talent. Yet, according to the IMF's AI preparedness index, India came in somewhere at the middle — No.72, out of 174 countries surveyed. But as AI sweeps through the vast hinterlands, India might now be rapidly getting prepared for an AI-driven world. True, AI is not arriving as one single revolution. It is arriving as many small, uneven changes.

Reporting by Pinak Priya Bhattacharya, Falguni Banerjee, Subhro Maitra, BK Mishra, Krishnachand KR, PS Sreeraj, Animesh Jain, Meenakshi Sharma, Chethan Kumar, Umamaheshwara Rao & Neel Kamal
With inputs from: AFP

How this Bengali became the face of new Melbourne

Roshena Campbell, the first Indian-Australian to become deputy lord mayor of Melbourne, says it will always welcome Indian students — not just to study, but to make a life for themselves in the city

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As Melbourne forges its identity as one of the world's most multicultural cities, Roshena Campbell sits at the intersection of civic power and migration history. A barrister and the deputy lord mayor — the first Indian-Australian to hold the office — her rise mirrors the city's changing face and growing influence of its Indian diaspora.

Seated in her Town Hall chambers, she wears the achievement lightly, much like the pale pink blazer she sports on one of Melbourne's warmest Autumn days in years.

Campbell wastes no time in addressing the day's burning issue — jobs and opportunity, stressing that prospects for Indians in Melbourne remain strong, even as hiring slows and new openings thin across much of the Western world.

Indian student enrolments in Australia have grown exponentially over the past 15 years, reported to be at 1,28,580 in 2025, an increase of 31,000 from the pre-pandemic peak and close to 7 times higher than in 2005.

She points to the number of major Indian IT companies with their country headquarters in Melbourne — including Infosys, which has been present for more than 25 years and is the digital partner of Australian Open, as well as Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech and FirstSource — as evidence of expanding opportunities for students.

In Campbell's most recent visit to India — which was late last year — she criss-crossed the country with lord mayor Nicholas Reece, engaging with stakeholders. "There will be around a thousand new jobs in total across these companies in Melbourne, they all made commitments to grow their head offices," she says.

"There will be multiple opportunities for Indian students studying here to find a career in an Indian tech company based in Melbourne," she adds. "They can see where that takes them — whether that means they create a life for themselves here in Melbourne, or they decide to move back to India."

> We have a stable govt here in Australia, and from a Melbourne perspective, we have the back of international students... (The city) has the largest and fastest-growing diaspora. Indian culture is now embedded in the DNA of Melbourne
> — ROSHENA CAMPBELL

The only child of immigrant parents Swarup and Sumatra Dutta, Campbell is personally invested in that journey.

"My father came here as an international student in the 70s; he was studying architecture. He met my mother here — she was down from Kolkata on a holiday visiting her sister. They married and went on to raise their family here. I'm now raising my four children here," she said.

Roshena moved from Sydney to Melbourne at 17 to pursue her education. Married to political editor James Campbell, the couple have four children, aged between two and 12.

While listing Melbourne's many credentials, including its status as a leading international student destination, she points to growing instability elsewhere — "Whether that is the UK, where some pretty fierce debates on immigration are happening, or the United States, where there is a real lack of certainty."

"We have a stable govt here in Australia, and from a Melbourne perspective, we have the back of international students. We will always be making the case for them to not only study in this country, but also to be able to make a life here for themselves."

Melbourne, home to the oldest continuous Chinatown in the Western world, dating back to the Victorian gold rush of the 1850s, also boasts a Little Italy, the Greek Precinct and Koreatown. To that mix, the City of Melbourne is committed to adding a Little India Precinct during this four-year council term.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to celebrate Diwali and Holi there. The idea that if you want to buy a sari or a piece of jewellery it can be done," she says. "That will not just be for our Indian community; it will be for every Melburnian to celebrate Indian culture."

No conversation with a person of Indian descent is complete without touching on the country's culinary breadth.

For much of the Western world, Indian food was once reduced to a narrow distinction between masala — butter or tikka. Campbell says Melbourne has long moved beyond that. She pointed to the rapid expansion of the Australian Indian restaurant chain Dosa Hut, a pioneer of authentic South Indian cuisine in the region.

"Dosa Hut is in people's minds now in the way that McDonald's was in the 90s," she says. "The fact that you not only have outlets in cities like Melbourne, but also in regional areas of Victoria, like Bendigo, that's unsurprising because Melbourne has the largest and fastest-growing diaspora. Indian culture is now embedded in the DNA of this city."

Asked to choose between dosa and butter chicken, she says there is far more on the menu.

"As a Bengali, I do have a particular love of fish and prawn curries," she says, before adding, "But my father studied in Chennai, so we've always been a dosa and idli household as well. It used to be the case that when you asked people about Indian food, they'd say butter chicken. Now, people here say masala dosa!"

Campbell visits India as often as possible and has family — aunts and cousins spread across the country, but Kolkata will always be home.

She understands Bengali fully, though she is not a fluent speaker, and has ensured the language remains a constant in her household. Her children also understand it well, having spent much of their time with her parents. Campbell believes cultural identity must be consciously maintained, particularly among Indians living abroad.

She points to the role her parents continue to play, having made significant sacrifices while raising her and now doing the same as they help raise her children. Their involvement spans everyday routines, from cooking and reading to transporting the children to sporting commitments. Campbell sees this intergenerational support as emblematic of the enduring strength of the Indian family — a model that continues to thrive far beyond India's borders.

This correspondent met the deputy lord mayor on a blistering day, when temperatures topped 45 degrees, and asked her how she gets around the city.

Campbell likes to walk, and tosses away her formal, pointed shoes (like the ones she was wearing for the interview), for feet-friendly footwear whenever she can.

"I use all modes of transport, so it depends on what my day looks like. I hop on a tram, or if I've got lots of commitments around the city, I drive myself. Sometimes, I do that because I've got to drop my kids to school on the way," she says. "But most days I try and walk. That is the best way to know what is going well and what needs to be improved."

INQUIZITIVE

JOY BHATTACHARJYA

1 If you planned to cruise the Bosphorus Straits, visit the Grand and Spice Bazaars, check out the **Blue Mosque** and Taksim Square, before returning for a refreshing icecream at your hotel, which city would you be visiting?

2 Which mountain was first ascended by Joe Brown and George Band in 1955, but they did not go all the way to the actual summit, keeping a promise made to Chogyal Tashi Namgyal that the top of the mountain would remain inviolate?

3 In T20 World Cup games, what has only happened four times — in a NZ vs SL match in 2012, NZ vs WI in 2012, Namibia vs Oman in 2024 and, most recently, Afghanistan vs SA in 2026?

4 Four firms are regarded as the 'Big 4' of global accounting. Three of them are PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), EY, and KPMG. Which firm, originating in the UK, is the fourth?

5 Mexico is the world's largest producer of which fruit, sometimes also known as an alligator pear, which gets its more popular name from an Aztec word meaning 'testicle'?

6 Warli painting, with simplistic geometric shapes depicting daily life, animals and rituals, was originally done on mud walls, but is now popular around the world thanks to practitioners like Jivya Soma Mashe. From which Indian state does Warli originate?

7 With which specific instrument would you associate Dr L Subramaniam, T N Krishnan, Joshua Bell and Niccolò Paganini?

8 Which Pulitzer Prize-winning author, originally known for her English works, has also written extensively in Italian, 'in altre parole', and, 'Dove mi trovo', being two of her better-known works in the language?

9 Which animal, originally from South America, with the scientific name Cavia porcellus, also shares its two-word name with a phrase that means a person or thing used as a subject for experiments?

10 Ajay Singh, Vijay Singh, Ajeeta and Vijeta are the names of four of the six children of which Indian film legend?

ANSWERS

1 | Istanbul
2 | Kanchenjunga
3 | A Super Over, the last match actually saw two Super Overs
4 | Deloitte
5 | Avocado
6 | Maharashtra
7 | All violin virtuosos
8 | Jhumpa Lahiri
9 | Guinea pig
10 | Dharmendra (Ajay Singh and Vijay Singh are the actual names of Sunny and Bobby Deol.)

"AXAR, VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY, BUMRAH AND ARSHDEEP SHOULD BE THE FRONTLINE BOWLERS AGAINST PAKISTAN. RINKU SINGH SHOULDN'T BE REPLACED FOR KULDEEP YADAV, SINCE YOU HAVE TO RETAIN BALANCE IN BATTING." —Sourav Ganguly | EX-INDIA CAPTAIN

IT'S LOVE-ALL AT THE PREMADASA

Cricket World Ready For India vs Pakistan

THE TIMES OF INDIA IN COLOMBO

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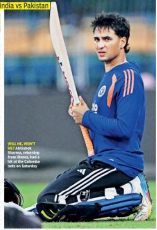

WILL HE, WON'T HE? Abhishek Sharma, returning from illness, had a hit at the Colombo nets on Saturday

Thirty years ago — Feb 13, 1996 to be precise — an India-Pakistan combined XI played the Sri Lankan team at the Premadasa in solidarity with the war-torn island nation ahead of the World Cup. In perhaps the only-ever actual India-Pak XI to take a cricket field, the match was an attempt to showcase that Lanka held no threat and was indeed safe to play in. Three decades later today, in this changed world of no-handshakes, that's probably an irrelevant anecdote. Or is it?

After an incredible amount of backroom negotiations, this T20 World Cup version of the India-Pakistan rivalry will finally take place in Colombo, signalling a sense of subcontinental ceasefire. The cricket bosses of all five Test-playing nations of the subcontinent, including absentee Bangladesh, are likely to be present at the Premadasa on Sunday.

Even the captains of the two teams seem to have backed off from their shrill dislike of each other. Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha had a word or two of praise for India counterpart Suryakumar Yadav, who returned the compliment by saying, "They are a good team and are playing good cricket in this tournament."

With fans trooping in from different parts of India, the 35,000-strong ground will have a predominantly home ground feel for India. Pakistan, however, have the advantage of being in Colombo for a while, having played a couple of matches at SSC, and with an extra practice session under their belt. The fact is that the playing arena is bigger than most grounds in India and the pitch for the game is significantly slower than what SKY's boys have played on of late at home.

Both captains tried to water down the advantage factor for Pakistan. While Agha said it all came down to the performance on the day, Suryakumar said they have played in Sri Lanka many times to know what to expect. "Pakistan may have a slight advantage but we have the experience of so many tours. And we know how to play in these conditions and adjust as per the situation," the India skipper said. Spinners and bowlers taking pace off could be key and Pakistan have played the spin quartet of mystery spinners Usman Tariq and Abrar Ahmed, left-arm finger Mohammed Nawaz and leggie Shadab Khan. It's likely that Pakistan may drop either Shadab or Nawaz to try and fit in one pacer in Salman Mirza or Naseem Shah.

'SKY' emulates Tariq action

The talking point, though, is spinner Usman Tariq and 'SKY' accepted that the mystery slinger is "out of syllabus". "But in an exam, you can't leave a question like that, can you," he joked, adding that India are taking preparations to counter the 31-year-old. In fact, once the India nets started, it was Surya who emulated with Tariq's stop-start action to Abhishek Sharma, who has recuperated well from his illness and is ready to play.

Surya, incidentally, bowled a couple of match-winning spells for India when they played in Sri Lanka at the same ground in a bilateral T20 series in 2024. It remains to be seen if he turns his arm over in match-situation on Sunday.

Practice session cut short by rain

All these equations, though, can go for a toss if it rains on Sunday or if a truncated game is played. As India reached the second half of their practice session on Saturday, they were interrupted by an evening drizzle and the groundsmen immediately covered the entire ground. The forecast isn't great for Sunday.

INDIA VS PAKISTAN IN SRI LANKA

Date	Venue	Format	Tournament	Scores	Result
20-7-1997	Colombo (SSC)	ODI	Asia Cup	Pak 30/5, Ind DNB	No Result (rain-affected)
25-7-2004	Colombo (RPS)	ODI	Asia Cup	Pak 300/9, Ind 241/8	Pak won by 59 runs
19-6-2010	Dambulla	ODI	Asia Cup	Pak 267, Ind 271/7	India won by 3 wickets
30-9-2012	Colombo (RPS)	T20I	T20 WC	Pak 128, Ind 129/2	India won by 8 wickets
2-9-2023	Kandy	ODI	Asia Cup	Ind 266, Pak DNB	No Result (rain-affected)
10-9-2023	Colombo (RPS)	ODI	Asia Cup	Ind 356-2, Pak 128	India won by 228 runs

FACE-OFF

IND vs PAK

TV TIME: 7 PM
STAR SPORTS
JIOHOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

IND	PAK
13	3

LAST FIVE MATCHES

IND	W	W	W	L	W
PAK	W	W	W	W	W

VENUE: COLOMBO (RPS)

WEATHER 27°C

ODDS

IND	PAK
4/10	7/4

15 Wickets taken by Hardik Pandya in 9 matches at a strike rate of 11, the best by a bowler in India-Pak T20Is.

189.65 Abhishek Sharma's strike rate is the highest among batters with 100-plus runs in T20Is between the two teams.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

100% Suryakumar Yadav has won all three T20Is he has captained against Pak—by 7 wickets on Sep 14, six wickets on Sep 21 & 5 wickets on Sep 28 in the 2025 T20 Asia Cup.

7 Matches won by India out of eight played against Pakistan in the T20 World Cup. Pakistan's only victory came by 10 wickets in Dubai on Oct 24, 2021. It remains their only win in 16 matches against India in the T20 and 50-over World Cups combined.

"No matter how much you say that it (India-Pakistan) is just another game, it is a big game. We don't play them often, we don't even play them regularly. There is pressure, but there is a big opportunity. But at the end of the day, we try to keep things simple and try to execute our best game. According to me, when you play an India-Pakistan game, it's more about the occasion."
—Suryakumar Yadav

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England hold nerve to down tricky Scotland

Saibal.Bose@timesofindia.com

63* Tom Banton's unbeaten innings is his first half-century in the T20 World Cup and his fourth in T20Is. He won his second Player of the Match award.

Kolkata: England navigated choppy waters to register a five-wicket win over Scotland. Barring an unlikely, heavy defeat to Italy on Monday, England now look set to secure a place in the Super 8s.

While the result was no surprise, England lived through a few anxious moments along the way. Their bowlers did well to restrict Scotland to 152 in 19.4 overs but the early dismissals of Phil Salt and Jos Buttler caused brief concern in the English camp. Eventually, England chased down the target, with 155/5 in 18.2 overs.

Chasing a modest target requiring just over seven-and-a-half runs per over, Jacob Bethell and Tom Banton had the luxury of rebuilding the innings after England slipped to 13/1. A cautious Powerplay, which yielded 43 runs, posed little concern as long as the pair remained at the crease.

After the Powerplay, both batters showed their ability to accelerate at will, shifting through the gears with ease before Bethell (32 off 28b) fell trying to clear the ropes once too often. That, however, is the nature of T20 cricket and with 82/3 on the board at the halfway mark, England were still in a strong position.

Banton continued with calculated aggression, anchoring the chase with his fourth T20I half-century — 63* (41 balls; 4x4, 3x6).

Earlier, England's bowlers exploited helpful conditions to keep Scotland's total within reach. Jofra Archer had figures of 2/24. His early blows rocked Scotland and forced them onto the back foot from the outset. A quickfire 49 (off 32b; 5x4, 2x6) from captain Richie Berrington and his 71-run partnership with Tom Bruce lifted Scotland beyond 150.

Brief scores: England 155/5 (Banton 63*, Bethell 32, Davidson 1-12) beat Scotland 152 (Berrington 49, Rashid 3-36, Archer 2-24) by 5 wickets.

Tucker powers Ireland to 96-run win over Oman

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235/5 Ireland's total is the second highest in the T20 World Cup behind SL's 260/6 vs Kenya in Johannesburg on Sept 14, 2007.

Ireland's stand-in captain Lorcan Tucker stepped up in Paul Stirling's absence with a scintillating 51-ball 94, keeping their Super Eights hopes alive and sealing a comprehensive 96-run victory over Oman in their Group B encounter in Colombo on Saturday.

Ireland piled up 235/5, the highest total of the tournament so far, before bowling Oman out for 139 with two overs to spare.

The first 14 overs of the Ireland innings was all about adjusting to the slow surface. It was their late assault that was staggering. Ireland smashed eight sixes in the final three overs alone, as the last five overs yielded 93 runs.

The Irish innings, however, began shakily. Oman's left-arm spinner Shakeel Ahmed struck three times in the Powerplay to leave Ireland reeling at 45/3 after five overs. His dismissals showcased variety. Tim Tector fell to an arm-ball; Ross Adair miscued a flighted delivery; and Harry Tector was undone by dip and turn.

It went from bad to worse when Aamir Kaleem removed Curtis Campher in the eighth over, reducing Ireland to 64/4.

Tucker adjusted smartly on a sluggish wicket to rebuild the innings alongside Gareth Delany (56 off 30b; 3x4, 4x6).

Brief scores: Ireland 235/5 (L Tucker 94 not out, G Delany 56, S Ahmed 3/33) beat Oman 139 all out in 18 overs (A Kaleem 50, H Mirza 46; J Little 3/16, M Humphreys 2/27) by 96 runs.

Kuldeep in for Arshdeep?

Have To See What Combo Worked In Asia Cup: Surya

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TRY THIS: Calling him 'out of syllabus,' SKY attempted Tariq's action at nets

Colombo: Suryakumar Yadav loves to do things with a smile. And the two most important issues — the possible resumption of handshakes and the inclusion of spinner Kuldeep Yadav — dominated Surya's media interaction. After Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha put the ball in India's court on the handshake issue, SKY smiled: "If it's a thriller, let it be a thriller for one more night. Let's enjoy the game, and then you'll see what we do."

"But the handshake is before the toss," somebody said and Surya maintained his happy, chirpy self. *"Arey, wait kar lo bhai,"* he said, not exactly shutting the option. It was a departure from the extreme tension around the India-Pak games in September's Asia Cup.

Then came the question of Kuleep making it to the playing XI. The left-arm wrist spinner was a super success for India in the Asia Cup, dismantling Pakistan in the Asia Cup final with 4/30. In the first match he had got 3/18. Kuldeep has always enjoyed a stranglehold over Babar Azam, Pakistan's anchor man at No. 4.

Asked whether Kuldeep would play, Surya laughed and asked everyone to wait but left enough hints. "In Asia Cup, the pitch was similar and it was a big ground. We have to see what combinations worked for us then. I feel similar combinations will be played here, it's a good headache to have," Surya said.

If Kuldeep has to play, however, one pacer has to be left out, and the axe could fall on Arshdeep Singh. India are not likely to reduce their batting depth, using Axar Patel at No. 8, unless the match is curtailed by rain. "It's very difficult to decide which fast bowler to play. All our fast bowlers are good and spinners have done well too," he said.

"I want to have different plans for different games. I go with what I feel is the need of the hour in a specific game," he said.

Nepal brace for WI test

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Mumbai: Former Australia batter Stuart Law, part of the team that reached the 1996 World Cup final, has since carved out a wide-ranging and accomplished coaching career. He has led Bangladesh (2011–12), West Indies (2017–19), Afghanistan (interim, 2022), Bangladesh Under-19 (2022) and USA (2024), and has been Nepal's head coach since March 2025.

The well-travelled coach said he was not surprised by Zimbabwe's stunning 23-run victory over Australia in a 2026 T20 World Cup match in Colombo on Friday. Praising the African side, Law said ahead of Nepal's Group C clash against West Indies at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday morning: "Zimbabwe are a very, very good side. They've got a lot of bases covered. They've been playing a lot of cricket since they came back into world cricket and have gained experience. They've got a lot of knowledge in their squad. The Australians may have got it wrong at the toss (by choosing to bowl first), but you can't blame the toss alone or the decision." Law now hopes Zimbabwe's feat will inspire Nepal to pull off a similar upset against the in-form West Indies, who have won both their matches convincingly so far. "Zimbabwe just played better on the day, and that's what we can do as well," he said.

Despite being on the brink of elimination, Nepal have shown glimpses of their talent and fighting spirit, nearly chasing down 186 against England in their tournament opener. The Himalayan nation will need to display similar resilience if they are to trouble the West Indies. Nepal can also draw confidence from the fact that they defeated the West Indies 2-1 in a T20I series in Sharjah last September. However, their heavy defeat to Italy on Thursday would have been a major setback.

PREVIEW

Pak's own 'Captain Cool' keeps his poise

Agha Adds Touch Of Much-Needed Grace To Pre-Match Proceedings

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"The game should be played in the spirit of cricket. What I expect doesn't matter. But I do feel the game should be played in the way it has been played since cricket started. Rest is up to them (India), whatever they want to do."
—Salman Agha | PAKISTAN CAPTAIN

Colombo: The Premadasa was buzzing on Saturday afternoon. The general talking point one could overhear around the sizeable media contingent from both sides was on the lines of "let's finish off the enemy".

Thankfully, there was no fire exchanged when Salman Ali Agha, the Pakistan captain, began his pleasantly surprising interaction.

Agha displayed remarkable poise and an admirable, non-combative approach. His message was loud and clear — the Pakistan cricket team is here to play a game of cricket and not fight a proxy war.

While almost every question from the Indian contingent was entertained, it was Agha's response to a question on Abhishek Sharma's health that revealed, most of all, what an excellent sports ambassador he was. "I really hope he recovers and plays the game. He is a terrific player and we want to play against the best," Agha said, showed all the respect that the best T20 batter in the world deserves.

It sounded quite contrary to what Agha's one-time teammate Mohammad Amir had said on a television show a couple of days ago, dismising Abhishek as a "slogger".

It didn't take long for the Pakistan media to rake up controversy, bringing up Harbhajan Singh's comments on spinner Usman Tariq's controversial bowling action. Agha was asked, "An Indian bowler whose action was questioned during his playing days is now questioning Tariq. What do you have to say?"

Agha was in no mood to add fuel to the fire. "People are entitled to their opinion and they can say what they want to say. I can tell you, Tariq himself doesn't care. He is smart and mature. For us, he is just one of the 15 players, nothing more, nothing less."

There was a smile on Agha's face when another Pak journalist took a cue from their training methods on Friday and asked whether they are "targeting some of the Indian players like Abhishek". "We are not 'targeting' any player, we are just trying to counter what India has to offer as a team," the captain said.

And that was not enough. Questions were asked about the recent acrimony, all that has happened since the Asia Cup last Sept and whether Agha would be interested in shaking hands with the Indian captain. "It's not up to me. And it doesn't matter what I expect. If you ask me, I think the game should be (played in) the same (manner) since cricket started. The rest is up to them, whatever they want to do," said Agha.

Liberal or not, Agha is still the Pakistan captain. The pressure is immense and the demand is to win every game. He accepted that "India have been better than us in World Cups". Asked whether he loses sleep over the immensity of the assignment, Agha smiled again. "I am sleeping okay. It's just probably a few grey hairs that come with leading a country with 260 million people on the cricket field."

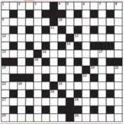
It's safe to say Agha is doing his job well.

THE TOI CROSSWORD

CROSSWORD No. TCC#0259

The **TOI Crossword contest** is on a short break, but the crossword itself will continue to be featured in The Sunday Times of India, so that you can continue to relish the challenge every week. **Stay tuned!**

The Times of India CROSSWORD EVERY SUNDAY



CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1 Nun wanders round the diocese out of sight (8)
4 Trains regularly? (6)
9 Irregular forces decoration (6)
10 In turn I've become idle (8)
12 It comes in to fight on the other side (8)
13 A metal machine operator in America perhaps (6)
15 Charitable group (4)
16 Spot cash the bookmakers must be prepared to pay out (5,5)
19 Community tax payment? (10)
20 Finished in a superior position (4)
23 Concerning tape being played - it's been on before (6)
25 I'm married and somewhat the worse for wear (8)
27 Two cutlets at once (4,4)
28 A coin's tossed to find where to have a flutter (6)
29 A late drink to go to one's head? (8)
30 Surplus wealth? (6)

Down

1 Sack a priest through perverted fun with stone (7)
2 Turn over in bed? (5,2,2)
3 Tax cut (6)
5 Has new moved south (4)
6 The Scot has his brief moment of masculine pride (8)
7 Magician's spell (5)
8 Poet is reserved about French female (7)
11 Astronomer to employ loveless contrivance (7)
14 Possibly saving firm in money difficulty (7)
17 Lice in the upper room? Don't worry (5,4)
18 Get over unkind act; that's plain to see (5-3)
19 Cross opponent of the Middle Ages (7)
21 New cadet or old soldier (7)
22 Exchange of charity? (6)
24 A picking-up point (5)
26 Chemical gives rise to difficulties (4)

QUICK CLUES

Across

1 Affectedly shy and quiet (6) 4 International tennis trophy (5,3) 9 Close at hand (6) 10 Southernmost tip of South America (4,4) 12 Quadruple (8) 13 Wild cherry liqueur (6) 15 Barely submerged ridge of rocks (4) 16 Sad sentimental film (4-6) 19 Wild and noisy (3-7) 20 Accompanied by (4) 23 Regular customer (6) 25 International waters (4,4) 27 Amount of money taken in business (8) 28 A card game (6) 29 Cause to explode (8) 30 Stalk vegetable (6)

Down

1 Ruined (4,3) 2 Reach required standard (7,2) 3 Snub (6) 5 Slightly open (4) 6 Listed individually (8) 7 Thwart (5) 8 Black leopard (7) 11 Branch of mathematics (7) 14 Distraught (7) 17 Position of extreme uncertainty (5-4) 18 Spare no expense or effort (2,2,4) 19 Generally considered (7) 21 Socks and stockings (7) 22 Accusation (6) 24 Cards used in fortune-telling (5) 26 Gusto (4)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

CRYPTIC

QUICK

ON THE MARKRAM!

Captain Leads The Way With Unbeaten 86 As SA Make Short Work Of 176-Run Target After Pacer Jansen's 4/40 Pegs Back Kiwis

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Ahmedabad: South Africa finally seem to have found their rhythm after a scratchy game against Afghanistan, where they just about to prevailed after two Super Overs. Against New Zealand, captain Aiden Markram led from the front as his unbeaten 86 off 44 balls helped South Africa overhaul the 176-run target in 17.1 overs for the loss of just three wickets.

Markram displayed his class as the Kiwi bowling struggled to challenge him on the night. He got off the blocks fast and had a go at medium-ball bowlers Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson. A six over extra-cover off Ferguson headlined his innings. As South Africa raced to 159/1 at the end of the Powerplay, Markram brought up the fastest half-century by a South African in T20 World Cups, off 18 balls.

While Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickleton and Donald Tooris all threw away their starts, Markram took the responsibility of seeing South Africa home. He did it while never taking the foot off the pedal, scoring at a strike rate of 195. The innings was laced with eight exquisite boundaries and four clean sixes. He just didn't give the New Zealand bowlers any opportunity to shake up the chase, Markram's innings was a statement, announcing that his team is peaking at the right time in their aim to go one better than last year's runners-up finish. Markram will have his left-arm pacer Marco Jansen to thank for not having to chase a much bigger target. Led by Jansen's spell of 4/40, a disciplined South African attack, which conceded just one extra in a leg-bye, restricted New Zealand's free-flowing batting lineup to 175-7.

Jansen and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj pegged back the Kiwi batting just after the Powerplay. Thanks to a prompt resurrection act by Mark Chapman's 26-ball 43 and the Daryl Mitchell's 24-ball 32, New Zealand could recover from a precarious 64/4. Their openers Finn Allen and Tim Seifert had galloped to 35 in 3.1 overs, with the former clobbering 16 off pacer Lungi Ngidi's second over. But the lanky left-arm pacer Jansen put the brakes on the scoring by getting Seifert caught behind in the fourth over for 17 off nine balls.

Allen, though, kept going hard at the South African bowling in the company of Rachin Ravindra (15). Ravindra's struggles in the World Cup continued as Jansen had him caught at short third-man by adoring David Miller. Jansen turned the screws on the Kiwis by ending Allen's enterprising knock of 33 off 17 balls in the same over to reduce South Africa to 50/3 at the end of the Powerplay.

86*

Aiden Markram (22) posted his highest score in the T20 World Cup and set a record for the highest individual innings by a South African captain in the tournament.

SCOREBOARD

NZ: T Seifert c de Kock b Jansen 13, F Allen c Markram b Jansen 33, R Ravindra c Miller b Jansen 15, G Phillips b Maharaj 1, M Chapman c Rickelton b Jansen 46, D Mitchell c Stubbs b Ngidi 32, M Santner c Rickelton b Bosch 6, J Neesham not out 23, M Henry not out 5.
Extras (lb1): 1; Total (20 overs): 175/7; FoW: 1-33, 2-57, 3-58, 4-64, 5-128, 6-141, 7-148).
Bowling: L Ngidi 4-0-34-1, K Rabada 4-0-27-0, M Jansen 4-0-40-4, K Maharaj 3-0-24-1, C Bosch 4-0-34-1, A Markram 1-0-15-0

SA: A Markram not out 86, Q de Kock b Ferguson 26, R Rickelton c Mitchell b Neesham 25, D Brevis c Mitchell b Ravindra 21, D Miller not out 24; **Extras (w6): 6; Total (17.1 overs): 178/3; FoW:** (-62, 2-182, 3-113). **Bowling:** Henry 4-0-30-0, Ferguson 3.1-0-33-1, Duffy 3-0-50-0, Santner 4-0-33-0, Neesham 2-0-15-1, Ravindra 1-0-9-1

Result: South Africa won by 7 wickets.

4/40

Marco Jansen has produced his career-best bowling performance in T20Is, bettering the 3/16 vs Afghanistan in Taroubа on June 26, 2024.

3 Jansen is the third South African bowler to bag a four-wicket haul vs New Zealand in the T20 WC, the first two being Morne Morkel (4/17 in Durban on Sept 18, 2007) and Dale Steyn (4/17 in Chattogram on March 24, 2014).

3018

Quinton de Kock has become the first South African batter to score 3000+ runs in T20Is.

3 Overs taken by South Africa to score 50 runs, the second-quickest in the T20 WC behind the 2.5 overs taken by England vs South Africa in Mumbai on March 18, 2016.

19 Balls taken by Aiden Markram for his fifty, the quickest by a South African in the T20 World Cup, bettering Quinton de Kock's 21-ball effort against England in Mumbai on March 18, 2016.

Upbeat USA hold edge over Namibia

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Chennai: Riding high on a commanding 104-run victory over the Netherlands, USA will look to build on their momentum when they face Namibia in a crucial Group A clash at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday.

While USA arrive with renewed confidence, their qualification hopes remain dependent on other results. They will need the loser of the India-Pakistan encounter to falter again in their final group game to keep their slim Super 8 chances alive. Namibia, meanwhile, find themselves in a must-win situation against a side that enjoys a 3-0 head-to-head advantage. USA are third in the standings with two points from three matches. Namibia sit at the bottom after two losses.

USA head coach Pubudu Dassanayake believes familiarity with conditions could give his side the upper hand. "I think we are ahead of Namibia, especially when you look at the conditions. We were disappointed we couldn't finish the India game well. Unfortunately, the schedule meant we had to play the two big countries first before facing the Associates," he said.

Reflecting on the emphatic win over the Dutch, Dassanayake described it as a statement performance. "That game was a message to everyone about how far we are ahead of other Associate teams," he added.

FACE-OFF

USA vs NAM — TV Time: 2 PM — Star Sports 3/Hotstar

HEAD TO HEAD

USA	NAM
2	0

LAST FIVE MATCHES

USA	W	L	L	W	W	
NAM	L	L	W	L	W	

VENUE: CHENNAI

WEATHER 30°C

ODDS

USA	NAM
2/10	5/1

2 Both of USA's T20 wins over Namibia came in 2024—by 13 runs on Oct 1 and by six wickets on Oct 5 at Windhoek.

—Note: Rajesh Kumar

Karnataka's star power vs Uttarakhand's fearlessness

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Lucknow: The Ranji Trophy semi-finals this season carry a refreshing mix of pedigree and possibility. While Bengal take on Jammu & Kashmir in one clash, eight-time champions Karnataka will square off against semi-final debutants Uttarakhand at the Ekana Stadium from Sunday. It is a classic match-up — decorated, seasoned campaigners versus fearless newcomers.

Among the four sides left standing, Karnataka boast the most formidable roster on paper. With five Test players in their ranks, including the experienced KL Rahul, they possess the experience and depth that traditionally define title contenders. Yet, the question lingers: can they convert their star aura into silverware?

RANJI SEMIS

Karnataka's campaign was anything but smooth. A crushing home defeat to Madhya Pradesh had pushed them to the brink of elimination during the league stage. It took a captain's knock from newly appointed skipper Devdutt Padikkal — an unbeaten 130 off just 83 balls — in their last league fixture against Punjab — to revive their season and propel them into the knockouts.

The quarterfinals further underlined their potential. Facing 42-time champions Mumbai in their own backyard, Karnataka pulled off a stunning 325-run chase, taming one of the most successful teams in domestic cricket history.

However, Uttarakhand arrive with momentum and nothing to lose. Their maiden semi-final appearance was built on consistency and collective effort rather than star power. They won four of their seven league matches and delivered a commanding innings-and-six-run victory over Jharkhand in the quarterfinals to script history. For them, every step forward is a milestone. Karnataka's strength lies in their experienced batting core. Rahul and Karun Nair — architects of the 2014-15 title triumph — bring big-match temperament. Mayank Agarwal adds solidity at the top, while Padikkal's current form makes him a key figure. Youngster R Smaran (681 runs), has also contributed meaningfully, ensuring depth in the lineup.

GEARING UP: Former champions Karnataka will take on semi-final debutants Uttarakhand in Lucknow

The bowling unit, too, offers variety and balance. India pacer Prasidh Krishna spearheads the attack, supported by the reliable Vidhyadhar Patil, who has claimed 15 wickets in four matches while chipping in with valuable lower-order runs. Leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal was outstanding, leading the side with 41 wickets and contributing 442 runs — often in pressure situations.

Other semi-finals: Bengal vs J&K

Uttarakhand's campaign has revolved around their spin strength. Captain Kunal Chandela has led from the front with 788 runs, while Bhupen Lalwani has provided solid backing. But it is left-arm spinner Mayank Mishra who was their standout performer, claiming 52 wickets this season. J. Suchith, a former Karnataka player, has added another layer to their spin arsenal with 25 wickets and 414 runs, making him a vital all-round observer.

History, however, looms over Karnataka. Since lifting the trophy 11 years ago, they have faltered in the semifinals on four occasions. Head coach Yere Goud dismissed any psychological burden, insisting the team is focused solely on execution.

"Definitely not looking at that. If you start doing that, it tends to play on your mind. We are focusing on doing the good things that have taken us this far and want to continue," he said. With experience clashing against ambition, the semifinal promises a battle of temperament and skill.

SNAP SHOTS

Poonacha-Isaro win doubles

Top seeds Niki Poonacha and Prudhya Isaro of Thailand won the doubles title at the Chennai Open tennis championship on Saturday. The Indo-Thai got past Great Britain's Jay Clarke and Mukund Sasikumar 6-4, 6-4 to lift the title.

Desai-Yashaswini in final: Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade sealed a spot in the mixed doubles final, while G Sathiyan reached the men's singles quarterfinals in the WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026 on Saturday. Desai and Yashaswini beat wild-cards Payas Jain and Syndreia Das 3-0 (11-9 11-6 11-9), Sathiyan beat Ionescu 3-2 (9-11 11-3 10-12 11-7 11-5).

Tough finish for Indians: Avani Prashanth carded a 73 on the final day to finish tied-39 at the 2026 Saudi Ladies International in Riyadh. Avani carded 69-71-68-73 for a total of 7-under. Aditi Ashok (72-69-71-74) was 2-under and T-58th, while Pranavi Urs (73-68-71-74) was 1-under and T-66.

Jain Univ triumph: Jain University clinched the All India inter-university basketball championship for women after a gap of 30 years in Bengaluru. Jain scored a 74-51 win over Punjab University. **Results:** Jain 74 (Gopi 27, Noorain Zaki 16) bt Punjab Uni Patiala 51 (M Anshul 13, Ekta 12) by 23 pts; Chandigarh 69 (Deeksha 20, Mehak 12) bt Mumbai 64 (Tejkiran 24, Sonal Yadav 12) by 5 pts.

Al-Ameen, Jain in final: Al-Ameen College and Jain University entered the final of the Dr Isaac Abraham Memorial Hockey Tournament. **Results (semis):** Dr. Isaac Abraham Invitees: Al-Ameen 3 (Harsha S, Aishwin 13, Raja 49 bt K.K.G.I. (Dharanesh 46), Jain 4 (Achutan 12, 51 bt St. Joseph's Uni 3 (Ali 9, Ali 36, Ali 38). **Host Kongunadu Memorial:** BMS 7 (Gajendra 6, Mechaiah 6) bt Garrett 3 (Kiran 58, Sunil 58).

BFC set for new start under Renedy

Fortress To Come Alive As Blues Host Newcomers SC Delhi In Shortened ISL Campaign

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Bengaluru: The grass blades at the Sree Kanteerava stadium and the seats in the western gallery that accommodated the Blues faithful were eagerly waiting for the Indian Super League (ISL) nights. The fans and the stakeholders were counting down to the days for the action to resume, as over the years, the league was nearing its business end by February-March. But here we are, all set for action to resume at the Fortress in the truncated new season with former champions Bengaluru FC taking on newcomers Sporting Club Delhi here on Sunday.

ALL SET: Ryan Williams (left) with head coach Renedy Singh

It is going to be a tricky season for the BFC after the departure of head coach Gerard Zaragoza and top foreign players, including Jorge Pereyra Diaz, Alberto Noguera and Aleksandar Jovanovic. But the club still has top Indian players and added star player Ashique Kuruniyan to the roster, who moved from defending champions Mohun Bagan. Renedy Singh, assistant coach with Zaragoza, has stepped up as the new head coach.

The former India midfielder has a lot of quality at his disposal and if he gets the tactics right and helps the squad to fire, then BFC, boasting the likes of Sunil Chhetri, Rahul Bheke and Suresh Singh, will vault past the challenge from SC Delhi, last year's Hyderabad FC, owned by the RPSG Group.

The players have worked very hard over the past few weeks and are fully prepared for the challenge ahead. It's a 13-match season, but our focus is on taking it one game at a time, starting from Sunday. Football is about maintaining the right balance - we want to attack with intent but also defend as a unit. The whole team will contribute in both phases, and that's what I expect from the players," Renedy said on the eve of the match.

Renedy also has striker Ryan Williams, a former Australian who is now an Indian player, in his armoury. "There's a real sense of excitement in the group. We've been waiting (for) a long time to get back out there, especially in front of our fans, at home. The environment within the squad is very positive, and when you're happy and confident off the pitch, it reflects on the performances. Everyone is motivated and ready to give their best from the very first match," Williams said.

'WE ARE READY'

Meanwhile, Delhi coach Tomasz Tchorz is looking forward to the big opener at the Kanteerava. "It was a productive time for us and we tried to develop our players as much as we could. We're ready to play," Tchorz said. "The Hyderabad FC knows a thing or two about the ISL having been part of Kerala Blasters as youth coach and interim coach of the main team last season.

The coach will look forward to a superb show from Serbian striker Matija Rabovic who is capable of scoring Delhi's first goal in the ISL.

BFC'S HOME MATCHES

Feb15: vs Sporting Club Delhi (7.30 pm)
Feb 22: vs Mumbai City FC (5 pm)
Feb 27: vs Punjab FC (7.30 pm)
March1: vs Mohun Bagan SG (7.30 pm)
March 8: vs Mumbai City FC (5 pm)
Apr 5: vs Kerala Blasters FC (7.30 pm)
Apr 12: vs Jamshedpur FC (5 pm)
Apr 18: vs Odisha FC (7.30 pm)
Apr 25: vs Northeast United FC (7.30 pm)
Apr 30: vs East Bengal FC (7.30 pm)
May 3: vs Chennaiyin FC (7.30 pm)
May 9: vs Hyderabad FC (7.30 pm)
May 13: vs Punjab FC (7.30 pm)
May 17: vs Sporting Club Delhi (7.30 pm)

Today's matches: Jamshedpur FC vs Mohammedan SC (5 pm), Bengaluru FC vs Sporting Club Delhi (7.30 pm)

India start key phase of WC prep

Sydney: The Indian women's team will start a key phase of its preparation for the T20 World Cup later this year when it faces Australia in the first T20I between Sunday. India are touring Australia for a multi-format series, featuring three T20Is and as many ODIs, besides a lone Test (D/N) from March 6 in Perth. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led Indian side will play its first away series since the ODI World Cup victory, touring six different cities in Australia.

The first T20I will be played at Sydney Cricket Ground before the action shifts to Manuka Oval in Canberra, and the Adelaide Oval for the second and third matches respectively. The series will be India's first T20 engagement this year. India enter the series as world No. 3 with Australia sitting at No. 1 in the ICC rankings. ##

Live, Star Sports, 1:45pm.

CRICKET

Hardik lifts K'taka as HP strike back

Hardik Raj came to Karnataka's rescue with a crucial half-century on a day when Himachal Pradesh dominated the proceedings in a Col CK Nayudu Trophy 1-23 league match on Saturday.

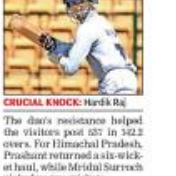
Resuming at 352/3 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium in Amtar, the visitors struggled to continue in the same vein as they managed to add 116 runs to their overnight total despite starting the day in pole position with seven wickets in hand.

Overnight batters Dhruv Prabhakar (65) and Aneeshwar Gautam (42) departed in quick succession. While skipper Aneeshwar was dismissed by Prashant Kumar in just the second over of the day's play, Dhruv departed in the next over.

Hardik and Yashovardhan Parantap then came to Karnataka's rescue with their ninth-wicket partnership, adding 127 runs to take Karnataka total past the 500 mark. While the in-form Hardik scored a solid 70off 114, laced with nine boundaries, Yashovardhan chipped in with a patient 31.

In reply, Himachal got off to a strong start as they posted 114/3 in 34 overs when stumps were drawn. Opener Sagar Malhan (56) and Atul Jaswal (62no) added 121off 140 delivers, before Sagar was run out. Atul Jaswal (36 batting) and Inmesh Mahajan (18 batting) were at the crease as the hosts trailed by 423 runs at the end of the second day.

Brief scores: Karnataka 1st: 352/10; 53.1 in 142.2 overs (Dhruv Prabhakar 65, Aneeshwar Gautam 42, Sumit Bansal 2/7, Ankit Raj 2/75, Yashovardhan Parantap 52, Prashant Kumar 3/90, Mridul Sarwan 2/78) vs **Himachal Pradesh: 114/3 in 34 overs** (Sagar Malhan 54, Atul Jaswal 36 batting). ##



CRUCIAL KNOCK: Hardik Raj

CK NAYUDU TROPHY

Regina Memorabilis fancied for feature

Times News Network

Mumbai: Imtiaz Sait-trained Regina Memorabilis, to be ridden by Neeraj Rawal, appeals most in a small field of three runners for the Homi Mody Trophy, the feature event of the races here on Sunday. Aman Altaf Hussain-trained Evaldo (Akshay Kumar up) looks to be the next best. The first race starts at 4 pm.

1. Homi Mody Trophy 2400M: Regina Memorabilis 1, Evaldo 2, **2. Madras Race Club Trophy 1800M:** Angelus 1, Lennon 2, **3. Amateur Riders' Club Trophy 1600M:** Miranda Of Rainbah 1, Don Julio 2, **4. Bonzai Race Picks 1200M:** Phantom Stride 1, Gunfire 2, **5. VP Karoganoolan Plate 1600M:** Golden Heart 1, Tajni 2.

6. Municipal Commissioners' Trophy 1400M: Undercover 1, Jurassic 2, **7. TM Gondhia Plate 2000M:** Wonderful Gabriella 1, Esperanza 2, **8. Ahmed E. Rahimtoola Trophy 1200M:** Money Fair 1, Lucie 2, **9. Stunning Plate 2000M:** Wonnerful 1, Mirra 2.

Day's best: Angelus. First Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, **Second Jackpot:** 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9, **First Treble:** 3, 4 & 5, **Second Treble:** 5, 7 & 8, **Third Treble:** 7, 8 & 9.

Guehi scores as City advance

Manchester City beat League Two Salford City 3-0 in the FA Cup to move into the fifth round on Saturday as January signing Marc Guehi scored his first goal for the Premier League club while Burnley were stunned 2-1 by League One side Mansfield Town. West Ham United needed extra time to beat Barton Albion 1-0 while Norwich City claimed a 3-1 win over West Bromwich Albion.

On Friday, Chelsea eased into fifth round as Pedro Neto's hat-trick inspired a 4-0 win at Hull.

FOOTBALL WRAP

BAYERN RESTORE SIX-POINT LEAD

Harry Kane scored twice in the first half as Bayern Munich cruised to a 3-0 win at Werder Bremen on Saturday, restoring their six-point lead atop the Bundesliga table. Borussia Dortmund's 4-0 win over Mainz on Friday drew them within three points of the league leaders but Bayern responded.

Results: FA Cup (Fourth round): Burton 0 lost to West Ham 1, Bournemouth 7, Southampton 3, Reading 1 lost to Brighton 4, Swansea 1, Sunderland 2 lost to Mansfield 3 (Oates 53, Rose 88), Manchester City 3, Blackpool 0, Stevenage 0 drew, Gosfo 0 lost to Salford 3, Norwich 3 Maghoma 51, Chrisene 82, Tzanis 90+3) bt West Brom 1 (Maja 66), Southampton 2, Aaron 45+1) drew, Brad 2(49) bt Leicester 1 (Slimane 52) bt. **German league:** Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Brown 24, Amenyiwi 34, Knauff 75) bt Borussia Monchengladbach 0; Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Kossonuh 13, Schick 24, Tapsoba 52, Palo a 78) bt St. Pauli 0; Werder Bremen 0 lost to Bayern Munich 3 (Kane 22-pen., 25, Goretzka 78), Hamburg 3 (Konigsdoerfer 35, 62, Capaldo 45+2) bt Union Berlin 2 (Laerkvist 25-pen., Ito 89), Hoffenheim 3 (Asllani 46, Kabak 51, Gordon 90+5) bt 1 FC Freiburg 0.

Spanish league: Espanyol 2 (Garcia 66, Soler 81) drew with Celta Vigo 2 (Jutglà 36, Iglesias 90+5), Getafe 2 (Arambarri 41-pen., Satriano 53) bt Villarreal 1 (Mikautadze 76). **Italian league:** Como 1 (Perrs 77-pg) lost to Fiorentina 2 (Dejaco 26, Kean 54-pen). AGENCIES

Belgium down India

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Rourkela: The way the game began here on Saturday, it seemed as if it was going to be a repeat of the Argentina game. But the Indian men's hockey team found their footing to make sure Belgium did not run away with the game even after scoring four goals in the first 17 minutes — all from the penalty corners.

HOCKEY

India found the target twice with Aditya Arjun Lalage scoring the first in the 24th minute while Harmanpreet Singh converted a PC in the 37th to the delight of the capacity crowd.

However, despite their better showing, the bottom line is India were handed their third defeat in as many matches as Belgium won 4-2 to make it seven wins in eight matches in the tournament.

Coach Craig Fulton was not happy with the start but was satisfied with the structure. "We had a bit of a slow start. It's never easy when you make one or two mistakes and a good team like Belgium will punish your mistakes. And that was on the PCs. So, we had a few too many soft turnovers that ended up in counter attacks," said Fulton.

"We had better structure and we were more organized. They didn't have any one-on-one. It was better. Now we have to add more detail to not giving away as many PCs because that was the difference."

LOKESH SETS NEW RECORD

Bengaluru: Karnataka's Lokesh Sathyanathan set a new national indoor record in the men's long jump, leaping to 8.01 metres at the Tyson Invitational athletics meet in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in the USA on Friday.

The Bengaluru resident, representing the Tarleton State junior team, erased the previous mark of 7.97m set by Tamil Nadu's Jeswin Aldrin in 2023. Lokesh bettered the record on his fourth attempt when he touched 7.98m, before becoming the first Indian to cross the 8-metre mark in indoor meets as he finished eighth. Cordell Tinch took the top spot with a best of 8.29m in the meet, a part of the World Indoor Silver Tour. ##

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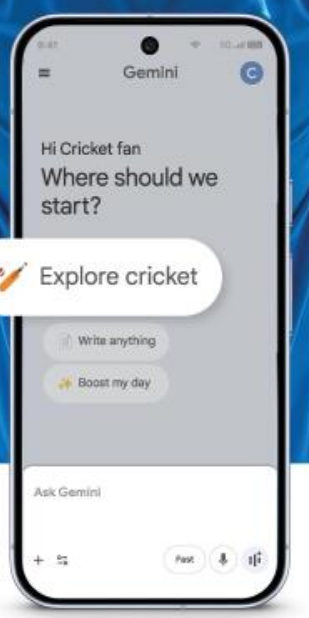

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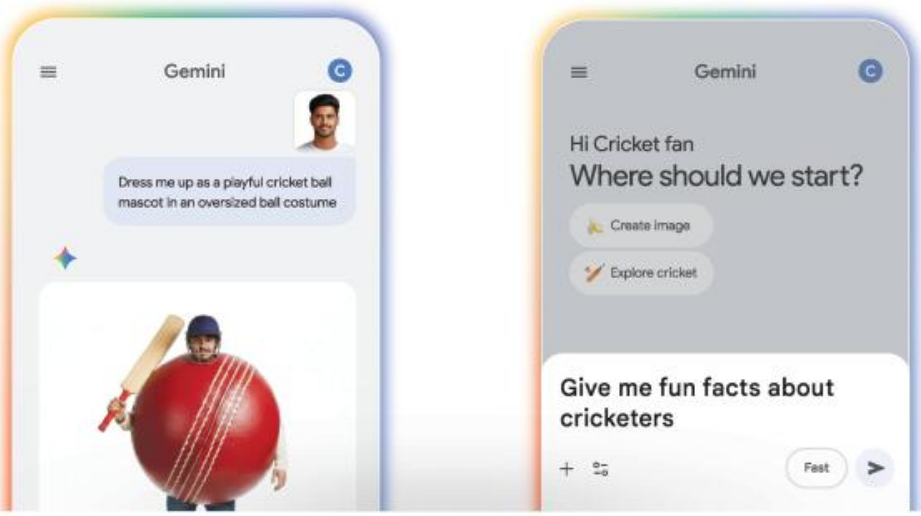

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Trump: Will seek to require voter ID for mid-term elections

Washington: US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he would seek to impose voter identification requirements for the November elections whether Congress approves them or not, without explaining the legal rationale underlying his assertion.

Trump added that he plans to issue an executive order on the matter. The Republican president is backing a House-passed bill that would require proof of citizenship to vote in US elections, which is not expected to advance in the Senate. The bill is the latest version of election legislation that first emerged during the 2024 presidential campaign, driven by Trump's false claims that his 2020 election defeat was caused by large-scale voter fraud. A similar measure passed the House twice — last April and in 2024 — only to die in the Senate.

Under the US Constitution, state govts oversee elections, not the federal govt, and most contests are administered by county and local officials. Republicans hold narrow majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate. AGENCIES

Airlines must certify use of merit-based hiring for pilots: FAA

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Friday that all US airlines must certify they are conducting merit-based hiring for pilots or face a federal investigation. Transportation secretary Sean Duffy said the action was to address "allegations of airlines hiring based on race and sex," and added that under the directive "all US carriers will be required to certify this practice is terminated." There is no evidence that any US airline is employing unqualified pilots. AGENCIES

US military gears for likely weeks-long Iran operations

US Fully Expects Iran To Retaliate, Says Official

Washington: The US military is preparing for the possibility of sustained, weeks-long operations against Iran if President Donald Trump orders an attack, two US officials told Reuters, in what could become a far more serious conflict than previously seen between the countries.

The disclosure by the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the planning, raises the stakes for the diplomacy underway between the United States and Iran.

US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner will hold negotiations with Iran on Tuesday in Geneva, with representatives from Oman acting as mediators. US secretary of state Marco Rubio cautioned on Saturday that while Trump's preference was to reach a deal with Tehran, "that's very hard to do."

200,000 PROTEST IN MUNICH: A member of the Iranian community carries a poster of last Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi during a rally in Sydney, Australia, Saturday. In Munich, Germany, about 200,000 people joined a demonstration against iranian govt, police said

Meanwhile, Trump has amassed military forces in the region, raising fears of new military action. US officials said on Friday the Pentagon was sending an additional aircraft carrier to the Middle East, adding thousands more troops along with fighter aircraft, guided-missile destroyers and other firepower capable of waging attacks and defending against them.

Trump, speaking to US troops on Friday at a base in North Carolina, openly floated the possibility of regime change in Iran, saying it "seems like that would be the best thing that could happen." He declined to share who he wanted to take over Iran. AGENCIES

Rubio warns Europe against the danger of Western decline

US secretary of state Marco Rubio said Europe's fate is intertwined with the US while faulting the continent for what he said was a drift *away* from their shared Western values. The double-edged message offered some reassurance to allied leaders at the Munich Security Conference but did little to temper their push for more independence from Washington.

"We want Europe to prosper because we're interconnected in so many different ways, and therefore our alliance is so critical," Rubio told Bloomberg. "But it has to be an alliance of allies that are capable and willing to fight for who they are and what's important."

"What is it that binds us together? Ultimately it's the fact that we are both heirs to the same civilization, and it's a great civilization," he said. "It's one we should be proud of."

Rubio's comments elaborated on a speech he delivered at Europe's premier annual security gathering in the morning.

"The alliance has to change," Rubio said. "When we come out on urgent or even critical about decisions that Europe has failed to make or made, it is because we care."

Urging European leaders to reject the "climate cult", he said the US had no interest in being polite and orderly caretakers of the West's managed decline." He criticised "an unprecedented wave of migration that threatens the cohesion of our societies." BLOOMBERG

BNP plans to invite PM Modi to its swearing-in ceremony

Looks Forward To Engage Constructively With India

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which is set to form the govt soon, is inviting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new govt as the party led by its chairman Tarique Rahman wants to engage constructively with India to advance the multifaceted relationship between the two neighbours. The newly elected MPs are expected to take oath by Feb 17, cabinet secretary Dr Sheikh Abdur Rashid said on Saturday.

Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif and other heads of govt of Saarc countries are among the leaders who will be invited to the swearing-in ceremony, senior BNP leaders indicated. This would be only the second time after PM Modi's swearing-in in 2014 that such an assembly of leaders of south Asian countries would take place.

"We look forward to engaging constructively with India to advance our multifaceted relationship, guided by mutual respect, sensitivity to each other's concerns, and a shared commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in our region," BNP said while responding to PM Modi's message on his verified social media handle X.

"Thank you very much. We greatly appreciate your kind acknowledgement of Tarique Rahman's leadership in securing the BNP's decisive victory in the national elections," BNP said.

BNP chairman Rahman said the country's foreign policy will be decided keeping the interests of Bangladesh and the people of the country in mind. In response to questions from an Indian journalist, he said, "The interests of the people of Bangladesh and country come first; we will decide the foreign policy by seriously considering their interests." Rahman said Saarc was initiated by Bangladesh and he would want to revive it.

"We are about to begin our journey in a situation marked by a fragile economy left behind by the authoritarian regime, weakened constitutional and statutory institutions, and a deteriorating law and order situation," said the BNP chief.

The interim govt of Bangladesh will organise the swearing-in ceremony and the guest list have not been finalised yet.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief Tarique Rahman greets media as he arrives to address a press meet in Dhaka Saturday

Hardline outfit Jamaat-e-Islami alleges irregularities, calls for recount in 30 seats

Dhaka: Amid preparations by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to form the next govt, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami on Saturday called for a recount in 30 constituencies for the 13th parliamentary election, alleging irregularities in the vote-counting process, **reports Ahsan Tasnim.** Speaking at a press conference, Jamaat leaders said a recount could significantly alter the outcomes at several of the 30 seats. Jamaat assistant secretary general and head of its central publicity department Ehsanul Mahbub Zubayer urged the authorities to suspend the swearing-in of declared winners in the disputed constituencies until the recount process is completed. He alleged that the results were "deliberately altered to defeat the candidates of Jamaat and the 11-party alliance," claiming that certain officials in the administration and Election Commission were complicit in the poll irregularities. The party, he said, is pursuing legal remedies over the matter.

DOJ sues Harvard over access to data on race in admissions

The justice department sued Harvard University for allegedly failing to hand over documents related to investigations into racial discrimination in admissions, the latest legal clash between the Trump administration and the Ivy League institution.

The suit filed Friday in Boston federal court alleges that Harvard for 30 months hasn't produced the necessary documents and other information the govt needs to ensure the university isn't violating federal civil rights laws.

The probe relates to a compliance review started in April 2025, the US said.

"Under President Trump's leadership, this Department of Justice is demanding better from our nation's educational institutions," attorney general Pam Bondi said in a statement. "Harvard has failed to disclose the data we need to ensure that its admissions are free of discrimination — we'll continue fighting to put merit over DEI across America."

The university said it has complied with civil rights law under a 2023 Supreme Court decision which effectively barred universities from using race as a factor in university admissions. BLOOMBERG

European govts: Russian oppn leader Navalny was poisoned with frog toxin

Lynsey Chutel & Anton Troianovski

London: Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who died in prison two years ago, was most likely poisoned by a toxin found in a South American frog, the foreign ministries of Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands said Saturday in a joint statement.

Samples taken from Navalny's body showed the presence of a toxic substance, epibatidine, the statement said. "Epibatidine is a toxin found in poison dart frogs in South America. It is not found naturally in Russia," the statement said.

Samples from Navalny's body showed the presence of epibatidine, a toxin found in poison dart frogs in S America

The findings directly challenge the official account from Russian authorities, which was that he died of natural causes. Instead, the statement said, the presence of a foreign toxin shows that Russian authorities most likely killed Navalny, who was the govt's most prominent political opponent when he died in a maximum-security prison in the Russian Arctic in 2024.

"Navalny died while held in prison, meaning Russia had the means, motive and opportunity to administer this poison to him," the joint statement said. "It was also clear evidence that Russia has not ended its use of chemical weapons, disregarding international law."

Aides to Navalny have said that he was close to being released in a prisoner exchange with the West when he died. They argued that by killing him, the Kremlin would have removed Navalny from consideration in the exchange negotiations. Russia and Belarus ended up releasing 16 people, including several political prisoners and American journalist Evan Gershkovich, in an exchange in August 2024.

News reports said in 2024 that US intelligence officials did not believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally ordered Navalny's death, even as they saw him as ultimately responsible because of the conditions that Navalny had to endure after his imprisonment in early 2021. The US govt did not immediately comment on the statement by the five European countries. NYT

Nato envoy: China call could stop Russia in Ukraine

China is providing crucial support for Russia's aggression in Ukraine and could end the war with a phone call, US Ambassador to Nato Matthew Whitaker said. "China could call Vladimir Putin and tell this war tomorrow and cut off his dual-purpose technologies that they're selling," Whitaker said during a Friday panel at the Munich Security Conference. "China could stop buying Russian oil and gas."

Drone strikes killed one person in Ukraine and another in Russia, officials said Saturday, ahead of another round of US-brokered talks between envoys from both the countries next week in Geneva, days ahead of the fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion of its neighbour. BLOOMBERG

Ashley Tellis indicted on 11 espionage counts in US court

Washington: A federal grand jury in Virginia has returned a superseding indictment against preeminent Indian American scholar and former US govt adviser Ashley J Tellis, charging him with 11 counts of wilful retention of national defence information under the Espionage Act.

Filed on Feb12 in the US district court for the eastern district of Virginia, the new indictment replaces the earlier criminal complaint that led to Tellis's arrest in Oct 2025. Federal prosecutors allege that from 2001 till Oct 11, 2025, Tellis was employed by the US department of state and, at various times from 2003, served as a contractor at the department of defense. In connection with his govt work, he held a Top Secret security clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information.

According to the superseding indictment, Tellis removed, without authorisation, US govt property, including documents relating to national defence and other classified materials. The indictment states that many of the documents bore markings indicating they were classified at the Secret and Top Secret levels, including SCI information. The grand jury alleges that Tellis wilfully retained 11 classified documents at his residence without authorisation.

The indictment notes that at no point during the charged period did Tellis deliver or attempt to deliver the classified documents to any officer or employee of the United States entitled to receive them. The charges centre on alleged unauthorized retention, not on transmission.

Prosecutors are seeking forfeiture of property traceable to the alleged offences, including materials seized from Tellis's residence in Oct 2025 and any digital media or devices used to store it.

Tellis, 64, was born in Bombay, India, and later became a US citizen. An indictment is an allegation. Tellis is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. IANS

CANADA PM, OPPN LEADER HOLD HANDS AT SCHOOL SHOOTING VIGIL

Canadian PM Mark Carney (right) and Opposition Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre join hands while attending a vigil for the victims of Tuesday's mass shooting, in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, on Friday. Poilievre, the country's main opposition leader, commended Carney for his "tremendous grace." Canada's political leaders flew from Ottawa together. The 18-year-old alleged shooter, identified as Jesse Van Rootselaar, killed her 39-year-old mother and 11-year-old stepbrother in their home before heading to the nearby Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and opening fire, killing five children and an educator before killing herself. AP

Astronomers puzzled over 'inside out' planetary system

Washington: Astronomers have observed a planetary system that challenges current planet formation theories, with a rocky planet that formed beyond the orbits of its gaseous neighbours, possibly after much of the planet-forming material was used up.

The system, observed using the European Space Agency's Cheops space telescope, consists of four planets — two rocky and two gaseous — orbiting a relatively small and dim star called a red dwarf about 111 light-years from Earth in the direction of the Lynx constellation. A light-year is the distance light travels a year, 9.5 trillion km.

The star, named LHS 1903, is about 50% as massive and 6% as luminous as our sun.

The order of the planets is what caught scientists' attention. The innermost planet is rocky, the next two are gaseous and the fourth one, which current planetary formation theory suggests should be gaseous, is instead rocky.

"The planet-formation paradigm states that planets close to their host star should form small and rocky, with little-to-no gas or ice," said astronomer Thomas Wilson of the University of Warwick in England, lead author of the study published in Science.

"This is because this environment is too hot to maintain substantial gas or ice, and any atmospheres that do form are likely removed via irradiation from their host star. Conversely, planets at larger separations are thought to be built in colder regions with a lot of gas and ice that would create gas-rich worlds with large atmospheres. This system challenges that by giving us a rocky planet outside of gas-rich planets," Wilson said. Wilson added it "a system built inside-out."

In our solar system, the four inner planets are rocky and the four outer planets are gaseous. The rocky dwarf planets like Pluto that orbit beyond the gas planets are much smaller than any of the solar system's planets.

Astronomers have detected about 6,000 planets beyond our solar system, called exoplanets, since the 1990s.

All four in the newly observed system orbit closer to the star than our solar system's innermost planet Mercury orbits the sun. AGENCIES

Assailants kill at least 30 in Nigeria villages

Maiduguri (Nigeria): Armed assailants on motorbikes killed at least 30 people and burned houses and shops during raids on three villages in northwest Nigeria's Niger State early on Saturday, residents who escaped the violence said.

The attacks on villages in the Borgu Local Govt Area, near the border with Benin Republic, are part of a surge in attacks blamed on "bandits," who have carried out deadly assaults, abductions for ransom, and displaced communities across northern Nigeria. Insecurity is a pressing concern in Nigeria and the govt is under mounting pressure to restore stability.

Wasiu Abiodun, spokesperson for the state police of Niger, confirmed the attack in one of the villages. REUTERS

DAILY PLANET

RHYTHM IN RED: Dancers from the Colorado do Bras samba school perform during a carnival parade in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Saturday

New research absolves woman blamed for a dynasty's ruin

Digging deep into a field in northwestern China, archaeologists recently uncovered chariot tracks, plumbing and the remnants of an elaborate city gate dating back more than 3,000 years — all traces of an early Chinese dynasty that has been celebrated by Confucian scholars, and also by the Communist Party, as a model of political and social harmony. The discoveries suggest that the area that is now farmland west of the city of Xi'an, in Shaanxi province, is part of the long-vanished capital of the Western Zhou, a dynasty exalted throughout Chinese history as the acme of good governance, the digging part of decades-long excavation work in the area, has also shed new light on a bigger question: If the ancient dynasty was so perfect, why did it collapse in chaos, unable to contain external and internal threats? It lasted nearly 800 years, longer than any other Chinese dynasty, but still fell apart in 771 BC under pressure from "barbarian" invaders and estranged former allies. The traditional explanation for the downfall of the Western Zhou, enshrined in the first century BC by Sima Qian, the father of Chinese history, is that the dynasty unravelled because of a beautiful woman — a concubine named Bao Si — who bewitched and led astray its ruler, King You. Recent archaeological and other evidence, however, has debunked this. The new findings highlight the frailties of a rigidly hierarchical political system grown brittle over time that could not withstand disruptions caused by climate change and internal division. A recent study led by Chinese scientists in Beijing has now provided what many historians see as a more plausible theory. Using evidence collected from stalagmites, it blamed rapid climate change, drought and unusual cold caused by a sudden change in the climate 2,800 years ago — just before the collapse of Western Zhou — played a "critical role" in the dynasty's demise, according to a study published in Communications Earth & Environment, a sister publication to the British scientific journal Nature. NYT

Did Jeffrey Epstein use Nobel glam to entice global elites?

Stavanger (Norway): Jeffrey Epstein repeatedly played up his ties to the former head of the Nobel Peace Prize committee in invitations to and chats with elites like Richard Branson, Larry Summers, Bill Gates and Steve Bannon, a top aide of President Donald Trump, the Epstein files show.

Thorbjorn Jagland, who headed the Norwegian Nobel Committee from 2009 to 2015, turns up hundreds of times in the millions of documents about the late US financier and convicted sex offender that were released by the US justice department last month.

Since the release, Jagland, 75, has been charged in Norway for "aggravated corruption" in connection with an investigation prompted by information in the files, the economic crime unit of Norwegian police Oekokrim said. It would probe if gifts, travel and loans were received in connection with Jagland's position. Its teams searched his Oslo residence on Thursday, plus two other properties in Risor, a coastal town to the south, and in Ringland to the west. His attorneys at the Elden law firm in Norway said Jagland denies the charges and was questioned.

While there is no evidence, in the documents seen so far, of any outright lobbying for the Nobel Peace Prize, Epstein repeatedly played up hosting Thorbjorn Jagland at his properties

While there is no evidence so far of any outright lobbying for the Nobel Peace Prize, Epstein repeatedly played up hosting Jagland at his New York and Paris properties in 2010s.

From an interesting guest to a subject of banter

In Sept 2018, during Trump's first term and in an apparent allusion to his interest in the peace prize, Epstein had a varied text message exchange with Bannon, at one point writing — in one of many messages with untidy grammar: "donalds head would explode if he knew you were now buds with the guy who on monday will decide the nobel peace prize." "I told him next year it should be you when we settle China," he added, without elaborating.

In one email from 2015, mixing in investment tips and praise for PR tips, Epstein told British entrepreneur and magnate Richard Branson that Jagland would be staying with Epstein in Sept that year, adding, "if you are there, you might find him interesting."

A year after she left a job as White House counsel to President Barack Obama, in 2015, Kathy Ruemmler got an email from Epstein saying "head of nobel peace prize coming to visit, want to join?"

In 2012, Epstein wrote to former treasury secretary and Harvard University president Larry Summers about Jagland, saying, "head of the nobel peace prize staying with me, if you have any interest."

In that exchange, Epstein referred to Jagland — also a former Norwegian prime minister and former head of the Council of Europe, a human rights body — as "not bright" but someone who offered a "unique perspective."

The financier wrote to Bill Gates in 2014, saying that Jagland had been re-elected as head of the Council of Europe.

"That is good," the Microsoft co-founder and the world's former richest man wrote. "I guess his peace prize committee job is also up in the air?"

During Jagland's tenure as chair of the committee, it gave the peace prize to Obama in 2009 and to the European Union in 2012.

Jagland was brought into Epstein's orbit by Terje Rod Larsen, a Norwegian diplomat who helped broker the Oslo Peace Accords between Israel and the Palestinians. Larsen and wife are also facing corruption charges in Norway due to their association with Epstein. AP